

Jesuit and *Seonbi* (士) in East Asia and the Production of  
the First Korean Supplemental Teaching by Yi Byeok --  
The Idea of God in *The Essence of Sage Teaching* as an exercise in  
Self-Cultivation (*Sudeok*) and Self-Expenditure (*Jeonghan*)

by  
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## Declaration

I hereby declare that this thesis is my own work and constitutes the result of my research on the subject. It has not been submitted in any previous application for a degree. All quotations have been acknowledged either by double quotation marks or by indentation. Sources of information, in both cases, have been specifically acknowledged.

Signed:

Place and Date: Wonju, 10 July 2001



### Abstract

The Jesuits, particularly Matteo Ricci (1552-1610), were the first enlightened missionaries who once in China discovered that the association of the God of the Bible with the old Chinese belief in the Lord of Heaven (Sangje) neatly conformed with the supplemental doctrine of the Deity they were reintroducing in the Middle Kingdom. Ricci's idea of God revealed a profound and apodictic interpretation of the Deity. If on the one hand, it built on the old revered Chinese notions of religiousness, on the other hand, it had little to do with a metaphysical, compassionate concept of self-expenditure one could associate with the experience of love-pain, or *jeonghan*.

Since the early 1970s the Korean concept of *han* -- the conventional meaning of which may be expressed in the English term resentment -- has been the subject of theological discourse amongst Korean theologians who identify it with liberation theologies that have developed in Latin America and elsewhere. *Han* suggests a wide range of meanings and 'pathologies.' Dominant amongst them in recent Korean Christian discourse is *wonhan*, which implies the bitterness of one who has been treated wrongly and who harbours resentment and hatred. While recognising that this is the traditional understanding of *han*, this thesis will fundamentally dwell on another dimension of meaning as conveyed in the term *jeonghan* which suggests a 'pathetic' -- that is com-passionate, love-pain -- rather than pathological dimension of meaning. The thesis chooses the term 'com-passionate' in recognition of the affinity of meaning between *jeonghan* and the Greek notion of *pathe* understood as self-expending affection, or in Cicero's term *sensu amandi* which holds life suspended in 'pathetic' self-expenditure. This reflects the interpretation given by the Korean *seonbi* (scholar), Yi Byeok (1754-1786), whose main work provides the central focus of this study.

The aim of the thesis is to invoke this more com-passionate and self-expending understanding of *han*. It will do so by examining the epistemological interaction between the Jesuit encounter with China's religious traditions, with special reference to Matteo Ricci's *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* (1603) and the Jesuit influence on a particular group of *seonbi* in Joseon (Korea) represented by Yi Ik, An Jeong-bok, Jeong Dasan and Yi Byeok. Against a background analysis of Joseon's encounter with Ricci's Western Learning (*Seohak*), the thesis includes an original translation of Yi Byeok's main work, *Essence of Sage Teaching* (*Seonggyo yoji*), together with the original Chinese version. Exegesis of the main concepts of this work will elucidate Yi Byeok's understanding of the idea of God as self-expenditure (*jeonghan*), which constitutes the end of self-cultivation (*sudeok*) through com-passionate affection towards the Other, towards whom the neophyte *seonbi* lives a heightened apprehension of sincerity and reverence (誠敬).

From this textual study the thesis moves in conclusion to a constructive philosophical evaluation of *jeonghan* drawn from the insights of Yi Byeok. It is argued that *jeonghan* should be understood as an existential path, insofar as it constitutes a return to Heaven, in which the individual existence reflexively enlightens, and thus transmutes, the dark experience of *han*, apprehended in a "ruined universe", through an ethico-spiritual process of self-cultivation (*sudeok*) which it lives as reverence and self-expenditure.

## Acknowledgments

The term *inyeong* (因緣), one's 'preordained ties', is perhaps as ubiquitous as the notion of *han* (恨) in Korea. I believe that it was the former that brought me all the way from the West, while the latter would keep the soul's thread hostage to Korea. One is not entirely aware what the rupture with one's former past means until the future becomes a present of no return, perhaps with the sense of fateful irreversibility with which Matteo Ricci left Lisbon towards the East in the sixteenth century. This naturally involves a decision, a solemn oath; Yi Byeok called *milmaeng*. One ought to live *inyeong* with absolute sincerity (致誠) and learn that it ultimately means a self-expending 'living from' the Other.

But as a person from the 'West', or indeed any foreigner who decided to adopt Korea as his or her 'irreversible home' should endorse, this also means the fateful recognition that one may forever occupy "the first place at table... because he [is] a stranger."<sup>1)</sup> One may feel cast off amongst what Ricci called a "very remote people" (*remotissima gente*).<sup>2)</sup> Then, *inyeong* can suddenly become synonymous with exclusion. But one struggles to preserve *milmaeng*. One admires and empathises with the people's struggles and tragedies, even if this means "the first place at table." A theological 'discourse of the victim' cannot do justice to what has become a history permeated with stoic examples of 'living from' and self-cultivation in the great Buddhist-Confucian tradition that characterises Korea. The history of the introduction of Catholicism in Korea is not different from elsewhere in the world, as it is marked by great persecutions and examples of stoic devotion.

By reading Yi Byeok's *Essence of Sage Teaching* and learning about his tragic death, I came to understand grief itself (*han*) as a darker variation of 'sympathetic', self-expending *jeonghan*. I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my wife, Namjeong, who brought me, though very reluctantly, closer to the *jeonghan* roots in her native Korean village of Sunchang (淳昌). I am grateful for her unfailing support and love through the long process of separation and physical disabilities that marked my stay in and away from Edinburgh. I am also thankful for the source of comfort and inspiration that my children, Seongho and Yegyeong represented. Before them, my personal heaven, I abide in reverence.

Without the support of Prof. Andrew Walls, who helped me focus on the comparative idea of God between Ricci and Yi Byeok, Prof. David Kerr and Dr. Andrew Ross, my excellent supervisors, this work would not have been possible. Also, I am grateful for the grant provided by the Portuguese Fundação Oriente. I am very grateful to Dr. Han Jong Hwan, Prof. Yi U Jong, at Wonkwang University. Also, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to my colleagues at the CSCNWW, and its sympathetic and very efficient staff, particularly represented by Mrs. Anne Fernon.

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1) *JMR*, p. 341.

2) Spence, J.D., *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, London: Faber & Faber, 1985 p. 56.

## Abbreviations

<i>EST</i>	<i>Essence of Sage Teaching</i>
<i>HEC</i>	<i>Historie d'Eglise de Corée</i>
<i>ICMG</i>	<i>Il Cerimoniali per I Missionari del Giappone</i>
<i>IPL</i>	<i>Instructions for Practical Living and Other Neo-Confucian Writings</i>
<i>JMR</i>	<i>China in the Sixteenth Century: The Journals of Matthew Ricci: 1583-1610</i>
<i>OFDS</i>	<i>Cicero: Laelius, On Friendship &amp; The Dream of Scipio</i>
<i>OS</i>	<i>Opere Storiche</i>
<i>SBCP</i>	<i>A Source Book in Chinese Philosophy</i>
<i>RTAH</i>	<i>Reflection on Things at Hand</i>
<i>TMLH</i>	<i>True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (T'ien-chu Shih-i)</i>

## Foreword

*Through days and months,  
I have been longing and longing.  
The way is far.  
When will he return?*<sup>3)</sup>

Being far and thinking about (緬) its distances the soul's thread searches for God, "the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out"; the God who is like "a woman in labor."<sup>4)</sup> A woman who, after panting and gasping, gives birth and becomes both elated and nostalgic of the anticipation she entertained, before, and during gestation. She may have created out of nothing, but she will infinitely self-expend and long for her endowed yarn incarnated in human existence: *creatio ex jeong-han* (情恨).

God, the Mother, faces the Void in which she leans in transcendence, whilst the expelled child seeks her creative footprints left in Nature; the child's heart being bracketed in fear (怖) and reverence (敬). Should the child return, what kind of meditation (*myeongsang*)<sup>5)</sup> would he offer, and how can he practice self-virtue (修德)? Would meditation and self-virtue reveal a "lostness that makes [the child] long to get back to the experience of true being?"<sup>6)</sup> But how, if God's endowed yarn has stretched itself deep into a "ruined universe"? Yet, says Yi Byeok, the "footprints trace back to an eminent source." It is this Source, both brilliant and painfully remote, that should inspire the *seonbi* to search in self-cultivation with all his heart. This is his journey of arduous learning and renunciation: self-expenditure.

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3) *Book of Odes*, ode 33. Quoted in *RTAH*, III:44, p. 105.

4) Isa 42:5, 14.

5) *Myeongsang* (冥想), the pictograph for 'meditation', is a compound noun juxtaposing two pictographs: 'darkness' and 'thought.' Yi Byeok also called it *mangnyeo* (邈慮); as he put, one should slowly enlighten the darkened senses (冥頑徐俊).

6) Jaspers, K., *Philosophy*, vol. 3, trans. E.B. Ashton, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971., p. 14.

# 雍 和 順<sup>7)</sup>



*Hsiao Kuo*, 小過

**"In his conduct the superior man gives preponderance to reverence."<sup>8)</sup>**

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7) *EST*, c.17.

8) Wilhem, R., tr., *I Ching, or Book of Changes*, London: Arkana, 1989, p. 241.

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Yi Byeok Portrait

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## INTRODUCTION

### A. The Paradigm of Self-Expenditure: Jeonghan

*Jen* (仁), understood as the essence of virtue -- i.e., wisdom, filial piety, reverence, courtesy, love, sincerity -- has been rendered in English as "benevolence," "humanity" "Absolute Goodness", or simply "goodness. *Jen*, in and by itself, is an untranslatable notion, for it does not centre on a specific type of virtue or endowment. It 'is' what lies "veiled within", to borrow from Yi Byeok, as an inner capacity (才) possessed by all human beings to do good. The question of course is how to dig what is veiled within, as Marcus Aurelius commanded. This Roman emperor seems to have approached *jen* and rendered it admirably in one short maxim:

Dig within. There lies the well-spring of good: ever dig, and it will ever flow.<sup>1)</sup>

The Confucian scholar, who in the Korean tradition is called *seonbi*, strives to actualise *jen*. He steadfastly seeks to dig within by cultivating virtue and an attitude of self-expenditure which is synonymous with utmost sincerity (致誠). Indeed, the sphere of utmost sincerity evokes a passage in the *Analects*, in which *chimyong* (致命) means giving up one's life, or self-expenditure:

Tzu Chang said: A servant [i.e., *seonbi*] of the State, who in the presence of danger offers his life, whose first thought in presence of personal gain is whether it be right, whose first thought in sacrifice is reverence, and whose first thought in mourning is grief -- he commands approval.

子張曰：士見危致命，見得思義，祭思敬，喪思哀，其可已矣。<sup>2)</sup>

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1) Aurelius, M., *Meditations*, bk. 7, 59, London: Penguin Classics, 1964, p. 115.

2) *The Analects*, XIX, I, trans. William E. Soothill, London: Dover Thrift Editions, 1995, p. 115.

For the *seonbi*, whose "first thought in sacrifice is reverence, and whose first thought in mourning is grief", this may imply *jeonghan* and *han*, respectively. The latter can be broadly spoken of as grief, "an unknown, mysterious reality even to Koreans themselves."<sup>3)</sup> *Jeonghan* (情恨), on the other hand, in this study evokes a heartfelt sense of reverence and self-expending grief -- a holy fear -- before the Eternal: the God of the Bible or Sangje (上帝). King Wen, in the *Book of Odes*, best apprehended this sense of reverence, as he "watchfully and reverently, with entire intelligence served God [Sangje]."<sup>4)</sup>

In Yi Byeok's *Essence of Sage Teaching (EST)*, as I will try to show, Jesus (Yaso) is synonymous with a *jeonghan*-bond, the person of self-expending jen, or the *jeonghan-in* (情恨人), in his self-perfecting relation with God, tradition and humankind. In the Christian Bible this relation could be called "an example of suffering and patience" (Jm 5:10); hence, one of "infinite resignation", or virtuous self-expenditure. Yi Byeok described Yaso thus:

[Yaso is a] 'participant of the five elements [五行]'... himself the child of the Spirit (神).

He acted in righteousness and overcame violations.

[Yaso's] personal discipline is compassion

[Yaso] cared for the tribe [種] and tended [牧] the afflicted,

Yaso came as the rescuer of the whole world, even in the pitiable situation of facing death.

Yaso enjoys power over the world. As he explained the teaching [說教], he gave himself in sacrifice in order to rescue all the people. In their hearts the people rejoiced: if one observes sincerity [誠服] one will be prepared to attend the judgement.

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3) Lee, J.H., *The Explorations of the Inner Wounds Han*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994, pp. 3-5.

4) Legge, J. trans., *The She King*, bk. I, ode II, 3, Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., reprint, 1991-94, p. 433. Sangje is the traditional notion of the Lord on High.

Hence, the idea of God which correlates with the self-expending person of Jesus, as it appears in the *EST*, will constitute the main focus of this study.

Religiously apprehended in dimly-perceived immanence (*munaejae*), self-expenditure, understood as *chimyeong*, reflexively points to the Deity referred to as "native heath" and "weaving Brilliance" by the Jesuit Matteo Ricci and the seonbi Yi Byeok, respectively. Yi Byeok portrays the Deity as vastness, "the unfathomable." It can be partially apprehended in Nature, and so, leavened by natural phenomena. But for the congenial seonbi who heeds his own Confucian tradition and seeks to abstract religious meaning from *Seohak* (Catholic teaching) the "God-relationship" ought to be one of self-cultivation (*sudeok*) and a heartfelt sense of reverence. The knowledge of God means an irradiating brilliance that expands and contracts, weaving itself into Nature and the human orbis, only to overshadow them. In this sense I translated Yi Byeok's rather unusual expression *jiphui* (緝熙) as "weaving Brilliance" by privileging the first pictograph *jip*, meaning to weave, to accumulate, to interconnect and to give birth. Hence, I have focused on the radical 'thin thread' (糸) of the pictograph.

Dimly-perceived immanence poses a harrowing temporal difficulty, for it casts fragmentary existence before speechless Eternity, "an individual before God" with her full responsibility to the Eternal.<sup>5)</sup> And the Eternal cannot but give "frail man a little time", and "there is not even time to utter [any] words."<sup>6)</sup> Or else, utterance would render itself haughtily meaningless, since time follows in with the natural pace of the seasons:

'I wish I could do without speaking,' said the Master. 'If you did not speak, Sir,' said Tzu Kung, 'what should we disciples pass on to others?' 'What speech has Heaven?' replied the Master. 'The four seasons run their courses and all things

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5) Kierkegaard, S., *Purity of Heart*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956, p. 214.

6) *Ibid.*, p. 43.

flourish; yet what speech has Heaven?'<sup>7)</sup>

Thus, one anticipates the Eternal as "a silent daily anxiety"<sup>8)</sup> or a Taoist-like "diminishing of self". In this study the person who responsibly and sincerely brings herself before the Eternal will be further identified as the *seong-in*. Yet, like Jesus, by observing sincerity [誠服] and giving herself in sacrifice, she is transfixed by *jeonghan*, anxiety and virtue. As Cicero put it, "If we are to run away from anxiety we must run away from virtue."<sup>9)</sup>

This anxiety further heightens a keen sense of com-*passion* (*sensu amandi*) towards an encompassing pathos of self-expenditure *qua* the Other: Yaso's "personal discipline is compassion." It is in this last dimension of meaning of a self-expending existence that *jeonghan* will be characterised as luminous *sensu amandi*. It will constitute the dimension of meaning which this thesis will explore particularly in its final chapter. One of the major contributions in this study is that *jeonghan* should truly constitute a religious notion (*jeong*)<sup>10)</sup> which may indeed elude rational or pathological conceptions. However contradictorily, it connotes objective hope likened to a primordial Being without being, as if an idea of "God without any conditions... without and outside of ontological difference."<sup>11)</sup> Indeed, *jeonghan* eschews mere discourse or explanation so as to invite one to stoop and listen to the reverberations of a poetic brook. Kierkegaard expressed this idea with teleological affinity vis-à-vis the *Doctrine of the Mean*'s rendering of absolute sincerity (致誠): "the

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7) *The Analects*, book XVII, ch. XIX.

8) *Ibid.*, p. 45.

9) Cicero, *De Natura Deorum*, trans. H. Rackham, London and New York: Loeb Classical Library, 1933, XIII:47, pp. 50-51.

10) *Jeong* (情) alludes to an encompassing '*sensu amandi*.' Etymologically, it also means 'original nature' (本性); therefore by *jeong-han* we have suggested the original nature of a pathetic being'(*ens*) whose nature is self-expenditure *qua* the *Other*.

11) Marion, J.L., *God Without Being, Hors-Texte*, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995, p.45.

unspeakable" -- like *jeonghan* and absolute sincerity -- is similar to,

the murmuring of a brook. If you go buried in your thoughts, if you are busy, then you do not notice it at all in passing. You are not aware that this murmuring exists. But if you stand still, then you discover it. And if you have discovered it, then it persuades you. And when it has persuaded you, then you must stoop and listen attentively to it. And when you have stooped to listen to it, then it captures you. And when it has captured you, then you cannot break away from it, then you are overpowered. Infatuated, you sink down at its side. At each moment it is as if the next moment it must offer an explanation. But the brook goes on murmuring, and the wanderer at its side grows older.<sup>12)</sup>

*Jeonghan*, not as an unknown, mysterious reality, but as a positive endowment, a "daily anxiety" which, "eternal in a man", makes one apprehend the Eternal in "infinite resignation." Thus, the human spirit would embark on an ethico-spiritual process of self-cultivation (*sudeok*) which one lives in "a heartfelt sense of reverence" and self-expenditure.<sup>13)</sup> Therefore, *sudeok* (修德), as introduced by Yi Byeok in the *EST*, constitutes the ethico-spiritual path of the *seonbi*. Once becoming aware of *jeonghan's* murmuring, the he will be overpowered and will thereby respond not by seeking an explanation, but by com-passionately digging within, and preserving his "origin" (*geunwon*) through *sudeok*. I will argue that this is the philosophical basis Yi Byeok framed in the *EST*, by referring to Jesus as "the child of the Spirit."

*Geunwon* (根源) is the origin, the root. This notion appears in the very beginning of the *Doctrine of the Mean: jung* (中) is the great root of all under Heaven. This refers to chapter 32 in which the person of sincerity is able to adjust the strings of the 'great net of the world', to establish herself in the 'great root of the world,

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12) *Op. cit.*, p. 49.

13) This idea is somewhat reminiscent of the mystical theology of Eckhart (1260-ca. 1329), whom towards the end of the thirteenth century attempted to bring the Eternal near to the *sensu amandi* of the people, as the object of an immediate intuition dependent upon complete self-expenditure. See Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher, trans. R. Schurmann, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978.

and thus nurture Heaven and Earth, a fundamental Confucian precept. In this light, *geunwon* is synonymous with absolute sincerity (*chiseong*) which must be kept for it is the beginning, the root, of all things (chapter 25). The verse also portrays the *seong-in* -- the person of sincerity -- as unfathomable and vast. Only those who are permeated with Heavenly virtue -- like Jesus, a luminous sagely-intelligence -- will be able to apprehend this dimension of meaning. Vastness, as the root or the great net of the world, characterises the Deity whom Yi Byeok termed *jiphui*. It is a brilliance which, being the strings of the great net, weaves itself into it, as its Tao or *geunwon*. Consequently, the *seong-in* seeks to preserve *geunwon* and return to the great root connecting Heaven and Earth. This is what is understood by the expression "the mandate returning to Heaven" (*gwichi o cheonmyeong*) which appears in the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

For Ricci, the great root meant or pointed to a religious awareness of a "residual harm" (*yuru*) latent in human nature. In Ricci's major work, the *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (TMLH)*, *yuru* (遺累) appears as dark sin, because what the Italian father was intent on elucidating was monotheism and its relational purity vis-à-vis Catholic teaching (天主教). This is what we will tackle in the discussion of the *TMLH*. He sought to abstract the idea of God from ancient Chinese sources, like the *Book of Odes*. In so doing, Ricci set to prove an idea, a supplemental paradigm in which *Sangje*, the Lord on High, appeared not in a com-passionate way, but primarily as the "father of all intellects."<sup>14)</sup>

In the *TMLH*, Ricci's rendering of *sensu amandi* -- which he had earlier presented in the booklet *On Friendship* -- was superseded by an Aristotelian-Thomist reasoning of God as *esse effective et exemplariter*, the *primum movens* and *causa finalis* of all things. For Yi Byeok, however, who was the recipient of this foreign teaching, this philosophical discourse was indubitably grounded in, and supplemented by his own tradition<sup>15)</sup>, and *jeong*, it will be argued, inspired him to take up a

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14) *TMLH*, p. 333.

15) Kim O. H., *Kwang Am Yi Byeok ui Sohak Sasang* (Kwang Am Yi Byeok's Sohak Thought), Seoul: Catholic Press, 1979.

com-passionate perspective on the Deity. In his eyes, in the paroxysms of *jeonghan*, Jesus perfectly actualised *sudeok* by affectionately living towards the Other, to the point of self-expenditure. Tradition-conscious Yaso appears overpowered by reverence: he was conversant with the old tradition, yet gave himself up in a "sacrificial cask." In the *EST* it is disputable whether Yi Byeok subscribed to the idea of Yaso as "the lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."<sup>16)</sup> Rather, he appears as a lamb who exemplifies *sudeok* even if he had descended to a "ruined universe." Overflowing in *seong* (sincerity) and *jeonghan*, which combine to give rise to an overwhelming sense of affection, Jesus naturally practices *sudeok*. And it should be emulated both by the *seonbi* and the commoner. This is the major theme of this study.

By reasserting *jeonghan* in this light, as distinct from *Minjung* Theology's perspective of *han*, the victim or the oppressed, the thesis will examine how *jeonghan* emerges and is welded into Yi Byeok's theologically poetic, and poetically theological *EST*, herein translated from the Chinese original text and discussed. In a systematic interpretation of the *EST* and *jeonghan*, poetry will at times permeate the argument and in some ways work against clarity. But it must be categorically emphasised that the discourse seeks to follow a com-passionate rather than a pathological, analytical train of thought. Poetry was the best vehicle of expression for Yi Byeok when he composed the *EST*. It seems to be the best literary vehicle which allows *jeonghan* to be dimly perceived in written discourse. Indeed Yi Byeok composed the *EST* was as a long poem, similar in form to the *Book of Odes*.

### B. Defining Limitations and Identifying Main Sources

Yi Byeok's *EST*, as a religious treatise, has been studied by Professor Yi Seong-bae. It was edited in both French and Korean versions.<sup>17)</sup> Professor Yi

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16) Jn 1:29.

17) Yi, S. B., *Yugyo wa Gurisudogyo - Yi Byeok ui Hangukjok Sinhak Wonli*, Seoul: Budochulpansa, 1979. See also, Ri, S. J., *Confucius et Jésus Christ: la Première Théologie Chrétienne en Corée d'après l'œuvre de Yi-Piek, Lettré Confucéen 1754-1786*, Paris:



examined Yi Byeok's thought from the doctrinal perspective of the Catholic Church in Korea, adopting a non-supplemental, and thus more orthodox idea of God. For example, Yi Byeok's sentence *hae-si-ja-seok* --"thus one should believe in *this* Seok [e.g., the Buddha]" --, Professor Yi translated as "*Il faut donc croire Dieu,*" which seems to suggest little concern for the way Yi Byeok lived was trying to supplement his interpretation of Catholic teaching. This study will seek to widen the scope of Yi Byeok's hermeneutical endeavour, as it is reflected in the *EST*, by emphasising a heartfelt sense of reverence and how it informed Yi Byeok's 'pathetic' discourse on *jeonghan* and *sudeok*.

In Korea, the only doctoral dissertation on Matteo Ricci and the *TMLH* was written in 1973 by Kim Dong-chan. This work looks at Ricci's criticisms of Buddhism.<sup>18)</sup> However, it fails to offer a theologically relevant interpretation of the *TMLH*, focusing on the supplemental nature of Ricci's approach to Confucianism, and it does not broach the issue of *jeonghan*, which is of primary relevance to this study.

If one is to provide a broad description of *han*, fundamentally understood as grief and resentment, Dr Chon I-du's classification of *han* is material, for he describes *han* in its four aspects (*nepo*): *won*, *won-han*, *tan* and *piae*. The shaman is able to address and 'untie' (*pulda*) people's *han*, particularly sheer hatred, and the *won-han* of resentment and despair. *Tan*, although still a melancholic form of *han*, can assume a sympathetically dynamic orientation and even merges with *biae*, the light type of *han*, which in our terms could be associated with *jeong*. In this positive dimension of meaning one can relate *biae* to *jeonghan*. According to Dr Chon, *jeong* "connotes the bright [element] of *han* [*hanja*, i.e. the pictograph *han* ] which is intrinsically peculiar to our [Korean] cultural sphere."<sup>19)</sup> *Biae* can be an echo of

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Éditions Beauchesne, 1979.

18) Kim. D. C., 利瑪竇 (Matteo Ricci)의 中國 宣敎와 補儒論, 天主實義를 中心으로 (*Matteo Ricci's Mission to China and his Yugyo Writings -- as regarding the True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, Ph.D. dissertation, Seoul: Catholic University, 1973. (In Korean).

19) Chon I. D., *Han Gujoyongu (Research on the Structure of Han)*, Seoul: Munhwa gwa Chisong Sa Press, 1993., p. 33.



*jeonghan*, a "song which strangles the throat"<sup>20)</sup>, as if reverberating *biae* fully intoned Yaso's personal discipline of compassion *jeonghan* entails, as when he lamented over Jersusalem:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, which killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not!<sup>21)</sup>

It would not be an exaggeration to argue that as an expression of *jeonghan* the Creator separated Heaven and Earth and placed the human soul in-between them, anticipating that the created soul would clasp both realms in its heart. Hence one could posit a '*creatio ex jeonghan*' which is strikingly similar to the expression pain-love (*thun-ai*) C.S. Song has elucidated.<sup>22)</sup> He called *tsurasa* the "tragedy of God", a word which means a "feeling of inevitable fate and sorrow that overhangs human life."<sup>23)</sup> The God of *tsurasa*, argues Song, is "much more expressive of oriental pathos than is the love of wrath... [as] the *tsurasa* of God is due to his painful love for his creatures."<sup>24)</sup> Hence, one could relate God's painful love for his creatures to a *creatio ex jeonghan*, as Song goes on to reinforce the concept of *tsurasa* with the Japanese adjective *yarusenasa*, which "expresses a deep-seated longing that has no hope of immediate fulfillment," because it entails self-expenditure towards the Other. It means *chimyeong* in the sense discussed above. How this notion has been systematically argued and substantiated is beyond the scope of the present study, but it encompasses, as it was enunciated in the *Foreword*, its philosophical approach.

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20) Ibid., p. 28.

21) Lk. 13:34, Mt. 23:37.

22) Song, C. S., *Third-Eye Theology*, Guilford and London: Lutterworth Press, 1980, p. 67.

23) Ibid., p. 63.

24) Ibid., p. pp. 63-64.

A.S. Park recently edited a book in which he doubts the "capability of language to express deep human experiences", particularly in relation to *han* which is "one of these experiences which language cannot sufficiently explain."<sup>25)</sup> Nonetheless he attempts to discuss *han* in the context of a theological discourse of the oppressed: the victims of *han*, rather than the oppressor, should be the focus of the discourse on *han*. It seems to constitute a sound argument that the Church and its representatives should distinguish between "the wound inflicted by the oppressor and the wound belonging to the oppressed."<sup>26)</sup> By so arguing, Park conforms with the traditional Buddhist interpretation of *han*, which classifies it one of the lesser twenty forms of defilement, according to the doctrine of the Fa-hsiang school (seventh century C.E.)<sup>27)</sup> It is the *han* that wounds and is wounded, that instills anger in the heart: *wonhan* (怨恨). Theologically, Park identifies *han* with sin, and the sinner therefore with the victim. But this is a reciprocal process because *han* means the transformation of a sinner into a victim and vice-versa. Park calls this transposition of vision a "perspectival alternation."<sup>28)</sup> Thus, his discourse on *han* means the perspectival alternation between sinner and victim. *Han*, he maintains, can be as perspectival as truth is in quantum theory, and it should be analysed, psychoanalysed, 'guttled' and worked off (*pulda*).

On the other hand, J.H. Lee, has offered an approach which also 'guts' *han* through a more explicitly psychological argumentation.<sup>29)</sup> Indeed he is keen to stress the

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25) Park, A. S., *The Wounded Heart of God, The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin*, Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1993., p. 20-1.

26) *Ibid.*, p. 100.

27) For a perspective on this school, see Sponberg, A., 'Meditation in Fa-hsiang Buddhism', *Traditions of Meditation in Chinese Buddhism*, ed. P.N. Gregory, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1986, pp. 15-43. For the growth of doctrinal Pulgyo ( the *O-gyo*, five sects) in the Korean peninsula, see Grayson, J.H., *Korea a Religious History*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989, pp. 74-86. During Shilla (57 BCE-935 CE.), the Fa-hsiang school, or *Bopsang-jong*, derives from monk Wonchuk. *Ibid.*, p. 78.

28) *Ibid.*, p. 105.

29) Lee, J. H., *The Explorations of the Inner Wounds - Han*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1994.

"pathology of han", as if it were a disease to be treated and cured. The problem with these interpretations is that they reduce the "mysterious reality" of *han* to explicitly cognitive categories, either implying the religious experience of the victim/sinner, which may necessitate exoneration or else an exorcism. It is a psychological disorder which can be treated by a therapist.

Park and Lee shed light on the wounded facet of *han* and they should be praised for that. I will consider them as the generally accepted approach to *han*. But for our purposes in this study, *han* as *jeonghan* does not mean only self-expenditure in the wake of the Other, but a dying towards the Other: arguably the the only reverential way "to stoop to listen" and live it com-passionately, as it appears in Yi Byeok's *EST*. To paraphrase Mencius, *jeonghan* subdues *wonhan* as water subdues fire.<sup>30)</sup>

### B.1 Methodology

This study will adopt a historical and thematic approach, closely taking into consideration 1) what Dr Chon considers to be the unique experience and expression of Korean experience of self-expenditure: *jeonghan*; and 2) the historical developments in East Asia when the Jesuits, notably through Matteo Ricci, arrived in China and produced the *TMLH*.

### B.2 Principal Research Hypotheses

Regarding the *TMLH*, I will argue that Ricci failed to advance a philosophically meaningful hermeneutics of the Deity as the Great Parents (大父母), a notion so charged with pathos in the Korean tradition. This constitutes the first hypothesis. In contrast to Ricci, Yi Byeok, considered one of the founders of modern Catholicism in Korea, did not privilege the Deity in 'rational', substance *vs.* accident terms. He argued that one can only approach it in reverence and awe, or *jiphui*. The second major hypothesis of this study is that Yi Byeok called for a com-passionate search

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30) This is in reference to 'Mencius' 6A:18. *SBCP*, p. 60.

and return by the seonbi to what Ricci had termed "original heath" (*bonga*), which Yi Byeok interpreted in terms of the preservation of one's "origin" (*geunwon*). Yi Byeok contends that existence finds itself in such a state of 'spiritual ignorance', that the soul, thrown away from *geunwon*, has almost no place in traditional Confucian thought. A return to the idea of Deity will necessitate *chiseong* as *chimyeong*, i.e., utmost sincerity as self-expenditure; a willingness both on the part of the seonbi and the commoner who, seeking to offer their lives, actualise self-cultivation (修身) and, would possibly attain religious salvation.

The means for this search may be abstracted from the classical Chinese book *The Doctrine of the Mean*, which unveils a heavenly mandate 'coming from and returning to Heaven'. One may refer to the return to the "original heath" as *gwichi o cheonmyeong* (歸致於天命) which religiously underscores, I will argue, a com-passionate response to the possible 'knowledge of God', itself equivalent to self-expenditure and *jiphui*.<sup>31)</sup> This will allow us to further hypothesise that Yi Byeok espoused an outlook on self-cultivation in which reverence underpinned his supplemental hermeneutics. Since self-cultivation, ultimately understood as self-expenditure, implies the ability to willingly resign oneself under the Other in absolute sincerity and affection, it will be in light of *jeonghan* that Yi Byeok's *EST* will be examined.

### C. Basic Philosophical Concepts and Main Terms

Existence is apprehended in self-expenditure (*chimyeong*) within a "ruined universe". Theologically, sin is equated with Ricci's "residual harm."<sup>32)</sup> The seonbi should

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31) Yi Song Bae, in his study of the *EST*, associated the Kantian *Summun Bonnun* with sincerity, but while Kant's problematic concept of the highest good remains unbridgeable, Yi Byeok interpreted human nature from dimly-perceived immanence, i.e from the perspective that Heaven conferred human nature, which in turn eventually retreats to Heaven -- a notion in consonance with the *Doctrine of the Mean*.

32) Ricci, M., *The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (T'ien-chu Shih-i)*, trans. D. Lancashire and P. H. Kuo-chen, S.J., Paris: Ricci Institut, 1985, p. 447.

understand it as such: it is synonymous with human separation or an impoverished spiritual awareness. The person of sincerity (*seong-in*) is therefore a residually 'harmed' existence who seeks to return to her place of origin, expressed metaphorically as "native heath" (*bonga*).<sup>33</sup> But this native heath, it will be suggested, is ethically and religiously approached in a heartfelt sense of reverence, i.e., it is perceived dimly, as in the rhetorical question Confucius asked: "What speech has Heaven?"

Consequently, the *seong-in* to borrow from Ricci, finds herself in an dimly perceived ethico-spiritual process of actualising *sudeok* through self-expenditure. In other words, the actualisation of *sudeok* opens the *seong-in's* path to a heartfelt sense of reverence and dimly-perceived immanence (*munaejae*)<sup>34</sup>: he is veiled by Heaven and lives 'self-expendingly' towards the Other. This is, it will be concluded, the essence of *jeonghan*, and constitutes his perspective on *jeonghan* I will attempt to substantiate.

Hence, this thesis will be oriented towards the dimly-perceived idea of the God of *jeonghan*, or "weaving Brilliance" (*jiphui*), as Yi Byeok phrased it, and Yaso personified. God it is who ceaselessly irradiates 'silken' threads of brilliance towards the human heart; threads which can be seen as a sudden flash only by those who approach the Deity in "ceaseless" absolute sincerity (*chiseong*) -- in jen, the essence

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33) I will not paraphrase the pictograph *jeonghan-in*, which denotes the bearer of *jeonghan*. Although it may seem inappropriate syntax, it is not an entirely unusual approach. One could recall Kierkegaard's term "*Guden*" which in English became "the God." The "native heath" is D. Lancashire's translation of the Chinese term "*bonga*" (literally, one's original family seat, or the head house), which appears in the *TMLH*. It reads: "man is born into this world to be a pilgrim, and his next life is a return to his native heath." *TMLH*, p. 239.

34) *Munaejae* (嚙內在) is a three-pictograph compound expression. For the sake of hermeneutics, it should be noted that the first pictograph of the expression is in itself a compound formed of *mu* (nihil) and *mok* (eye), which gives the pictograph the meaning, "to see briefly or dimly". Hence, the term could be read as 'dimly-perceived immanence', in the sense that Yi Byeok interpreted the Eternal, as *jipwhi* (Weaving Brilliance), i.e. as divine Vastness that brilliantly weaves Itself into the world by both irradiating towards and withdrawing from it. I will refer to it as dimly-perceived immanence (*munaejae*) grasped as a sudden flash into the Deity.

of self-cultivation. And self-expenditure.

### E. Thesis Outline

**Chapter One** is a succinct introduction to the history of the few enlightened missionaries of the Society of Jesus who reintroduced the God of the Bible in East Asia. I will look at the way the mission penetrated and settled in the region, which was in the throes of epoch-making developments: the unification of Japan by Toyotomi Hideyoshi, the Christian Century in Japan, the devastating military campaigns in Joseon and the on-going, slowly dynastic *déba*cle of Ming China. Under the influence of Alessandro Valignano, the mission in China took firmer roots by accommodating itself to the Buddhist order in Japan. Matteo Ricci criticised the three main traditions, Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism, but based his supplemental approach on the latter. Ricci's approach, being successfully implanted in China, led the mission -- through its literary works -- to reach the kingdom of Joseon. As a Jesuit, Ricci it was who founded a ministry of rational consolation, as I will try to demonstrate, grounded on the notion of friendship (*caritate*) and a shared monotheistic Source, compatible with Catholic teaching which he saw running through it all.

**Chapter Two** deals with the *TMLH*, particularly its second chapter where Ricci discussed the idea of God. It will be show that Ricci sought to identify the purity of the most ancient literary sources of China and associate it with Catholic teaching, thus demonstrating the compatibility of *Sangje* with the God of the Bible. In the Confucian context this meant, as it should be expected, an emphasis on devotion or *usin* (self-cultivation) on the part of the observant seonbi. Ricci tried to pronounce a rational verdict on the idea of God, and urged the literati to reconsider the ultimate weight of their long-lost "native heath" (*bonga*). However, what became of this verdict was not primarily a Deity of Heart (*simjeong*), the Great Parent (*Taebumo*), but rather a Deity of Reason, the Great Artisan.

In *Chapter Three*, it will be argued that Ricci's supplemental *gyo* was initially rendered almost as a folly and unacceptable to the Joseon *seonbi*. However, it gained the attention of another group of scholars, the Namins, in the eighteenth century. Practically and intellectually, they sought to restore the crumbling Joseon dynasty to new heights. This group embraced *Silhak*, Real Learning, as a hermeneutical tool to restore what had been distorted by a fossilising state ideology, Seongnihak -- Neo-Confucianism. A more religious disclosure took place when Gwon Cheol-sin and Yi Seung-hun shared the Beijing-produced texts amongst their fellow Namins. Yi Byeok was the pivot of the newly established group, and through him the Yugyo tradition was 'supplemented' vis-à-vis Ricci's supplemental Christian doctrine.

In *Chapter Four* I will introduce Yi Byeok's minor work, the *Hymn for the Reverence of the Lord of Heaven*, and the poetically constructed *Essence of Sage Teaching*, including the original Chinese text.

*Chapter Five.* The major theological premise in the chapter, which will characterise Yi Byeok's idea of God, is that he understood Yaso as a receptacle of *jeonghan* and *sudeok* which can be emulated by the person of sincerity (*seong-in*). This bond holds cultivated existence in sincere reverence and hence, self-expenditure. Yi Byeok describes the "God-relationship" as *seonggyeong* (誠敬), which we would render as sincerity itself synonymous with "infinite resignation." *Seonggyeong* can only be learnt and lived in dimly-perceived immanence and through *jeonghan*, which in Yi Byeok's words were perfectly exemplified by Yaso's "personal discipline" of *sudeok*: the dying of self towards the Other. In Pauline terms, it was a discipline of *koinonia*, a care for the tribe, the tending of the afflicted "during nights, mornings and months."<sup>35</sup> Despite speaking of God as the Unfathomable -- or *jiphui* -- Yi Byeok revealed a God of *jeonghan* who, as a parent, "arranged for the descent of the rescuer into a world filled with evil. He took pity of the people who cannot attain redemption and so (...) sent his son as the rescuer of the whole world." In

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35) *EST*, a.11.



this light, Yi Byeok asked, what shall become of suffering if salvation (i.e., *sudeok*) is not dearly sought after? By cultivating *sudeok* and offering herself in *seonggyeong*, the person of *seong* seeks to preserve the path that can lead her back to the Source, to *geunwon*. Her search means being constantly faced with and overwhelmed by "weaving Brilliance," and in it ultimately face self-expenditure as a "daily anxiety" eternal in a man; thus making one apprehend the Eternal in "infinite resignation" for the sake of Sangju, the Lord of Heaven, the Great Parent on High (父上太).

#### F. Notes

I have tried to be consistent with the new romanisation system adopted by the Korean Government for the transliteration of the Korean language in 2000, and not the old McCune-Reischauer system. The software I have used, *Hangul 97*, allows for a greater number of Chinese pictographs as compared to the *Microsoft Word* program.

The Chinese 'characters' will be referred to as *pictographs*. As in the example of the 'character' *jip* (緝). I have tried to interpret it as a 'compound pictorial graph', i.e., the 'character' thread (糸) flanking the compound 'mouth' and 'ear' (聑): a thread that penetrates the senses. This is a common reading practice, and may amount to what Jean Gernet referred to the 'illogical articulations' of Chinese language which is "concerned not with yes or no, being or non-being, but with contraries which combine with and complement one another."<sup>36)</sup>

The quotations from the Bible are all from the *New Oxford Annotated Bible*. As far possible, inclusive language is used throughout this study, but there are instances where the third person masculine is preferred so as to agree with the existing translations. Thus, I will refer to the person of sincerity (*seong-in*), for instance, in the feminine.

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36) Gernet, J., *La Société Chinoise à la fin des Ming*, Recherches de Science Religieuse, t. 72, 1984. p. 242.



## Chapter One

### The Jesuit: East Asia

#### I. Introduction

In this first chapter we will look at the Lusitan *Padroado*<sup>1)</sup>, emphasising the Portuguese mercantile-cum-religious mission to East Asia, which is of course the activities the Jesuits were able to propagate from Macao to Nagasaki during the so-called Christian Century. Since our interest will more directly relate to Yi Joseon proper, attention will be focused, though at this point only schematically, on the historical developments in the area, notably the Japanese campaigns in Choson in the last decade of the century, known as *Imjinwoeran* and *Jeongyujaeran*.<sup>2)</sup> We will point out that the *samurai* class was in need of a spiritual alternative to the Buddhist tradition which for centuries in Japan had been militant and corrupt. The Jesuits, it was felt, departed themselves in a practical and virtuous fashion. The *samurai* became congenial with the new teachers. There was something common to each other: obedience, hard training, and high idealism. But what made the Jesuit vision a relatively sensible and well-grounded approach? Our main hypothesis in this chapter is that if on the one hand the Jesuits tried to gain the sympathy of those at the highest levels of society, on the other hand they duly observed the ethical guide represented by the *Spiritual Exercises*, in what could be interpreted as the Jesuit ministry of consolation.

Moreover, it will become clear that Ricci duly incorporated to his mission Alessandro Valignano's book *Il Cerimoniale*, or *Advertimentos*, written in Japan at the end of the sixteenth century in which Valignano, the visitor, outlined the approach to be used in Japan and possibly in China. We will refer to the original Portuguese text and attempt to translate the relevant passages, which will appear in footnotes in their original Portuguese. Although Valignano truly set the Jesuit 'way

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1) *Padroado* is the Portuguese form derived from the Latin *patronaticum*, and equivalent to English 'patronage'.

2) We shall refer to the dynasty established in 1392 by Yi Seong-gye as Joseon or Yi Joseon, as it is also known.

of proceeding' in Japan, he was not totally able to penetrate into Japanese thought proper. He was keenly sensitive to the host country's social conventions which he called *catangues*. The very fact that he was preoccupied in bridging these same conventions by realistically abiding by Japan's *catangues* is a reminder that during his tenure as the Visitor to the East (1573-1583) and in other major functions. Becoming the Visitor to the East on 8 September 1573, Valignano was nominated as Provincial of India (1584-1587). This was the only period when he had not supreme authority in the Society in whatever area he worked. Then he became Visitor of All East (1588-1595) and finally Visitor to Japan and China until his death in Macao on 20 January 1606 Hence, it is only fair to say that Valignano, in the East, reached further than Francis Xavier, his predecessor.

When the Italian Jesuit Matteo Ricci arrived in the Portuguese enclave of Macao in August of 1582, the Japanese were a decade away from launching their first invasion of Joseon, known as *Imjinwoeran*. Historically, following the murder of Oda Obunaga (1534-1582), the general Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) seized control of Japan and unified it. He entertained dreams of Japanese expansion reaching as far as India.

In China, on the other hand, all the preceding Western religious orders had been either assimilated in the cultural environment or remained at the fringes of mainstream Confucianism -- the Jews, Muslims, and Nestorians. But none had encountered a missionary as determined and skilled as Matteo Ricci, who engaged with Chinese language and Confucian thought without any previous knowledge. Ricci was instructed by Valignano to become as fully conversant with the Chinese Classics as possible and in China he operated within and criticised the three teaching (三教), e.g., Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism. We will briefly focus on his ethico-religious mission proper, describing the religious traditions of the country, basically contained in the three teachings. As he grew in knowledge -- and in social hierarchy -- Ricci was then able to supply a relational Catholic-Yugyo paradigm which stressed: a) the correlation between the God of the Bible and *Sangje*, the Lord on High and b) some important notions of friendship *qua* self-cultivation (*susin*). Thus towards the end of the chapter we will take a look at Ricci's *On Friendship* and subsequently draw our conclusion.

## II. The Lusitan Padroado

Giampero Maffei, the accomplished sixteenth century Italian writer, greatly favoured the nascent Portuguese voyages of discovery, as can be seen in his elegantly written *Le Istorie dell'Indie Orientale*.<sup>3)</sup> This work portrays the discovery of the new sea-route to the East as a God-given field for the dissemination of Catholic doctrine in the *ultramar* and particularly in Japan. The writer praises Dom João III (r. 1521-1557) for having heeded the words of Diogo de Gouveia, the head of Saint Barbara College in Paris, and choosing to ask Ignatius Loyola and his group for help in this task. By then, the group of Jesuits were "able to convert all India" (*aptos para converter toda a India*).<sup>4)</sup> King João III himself subscribed to the vision of a Christian *ultramar* and did not hesitate to invite the future Jesuits to the Portuguese Empire in the East.

Ignatius of Loyola became the first General of the Order, who sent Francis Xavier (1506-1552), a Basque, and the Portuguese Simão Rodrigues to Lisbon in 1540. Xavier left Lisbon to the Oriental Indies in 1541, while Rodrigues settled in Portugal and thus established there the Society of Jesus. Dom João's brother, the *Infante Dom Luís*, was a strong advocate of the Society, which progressively played an influential role in the political echelons of the Joanine reign.

The Jesuit missionary discovery thus started. Francis Xavier, after extensive

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3) Originally published in sixteen volumes in 1588, Maffei's information about Japan is taken from Valignano's earlier treatises, which the latter only had the work to add, revise and comment. See F.J. Moran, *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in Sixteenth Century Japan*, London: Routledge, 1993, p. 33. For a discussion on Valignano's initial approach to the mission in Japan, also see Schutte, J.F., *Valignano's Mission Principle for Japan: From his Appointment as Visitor until his First Departure from Japan, 1573-1586/ Part II: The Solution, 15 vols. I*, trans. John J. Coyne, Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1985. For a general historical background to Valignano-Ricci period, see A.C. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994.

4) Under the the leadership of Loyola, the future Jesuits Xavier, Laines, Favre, Alfonso Salmerón, Simão Rodrigues, Nicolás Bobadilla, Claude Jay, Paschase Broët, and Jean Codure are the ten individuals who bonded together at Paris between 1528 and 1536. Amongst them, Simão and Bobadilla would later become the protagonists of two major rows within the newly-established order, in 1552 and 1557.

work in India and what is now called Malaysia and Indonesia, arrived in Japan in 1549 on a Chinese junk with two Spanish Jesuits. His teaching was met with considerable success, despite the language barrier.<sup>5)</sup> When he left the country, Christian activities concentrated mainly in the southern Kyushu island with scattered communities in Honshu, following new waves of Portuguese trade and Jesuit missionaries. Although the Portuguese mercantile presence in Japan and the Jesuit mission might appear inextricably interwoven, they were two distinct enterprises, as the Jesuits very early sought to maintain a relative independence from the Portuguese.<sup>6)</sup>

Omura Sumitada (1533-1598)<sup>7)</sup> was the first *daimyo* -- or suzerain -- to receive baptism; six years later more than six *daimyos* pledged their support both to Christian teaching and the Portuguese mercantile interchange. The Warring States of the preceding generations were coming to a close under the national unifier Oda Obunaga (1534-1582), who favoured the missionaries and granted them a number of privileges.<sup>8)</sup> This favourable atmosphere within the country was only challenged when Toyotomi Hideyoshi, "the greatest man Japan has ever seen, and the greatest statesman of his century, whether in Japan or in Europe", signed an edict in 1587.<sup>9)</sup> He feared the Jesuits' growing influence over the *daimyos* of Kyushu and a possible reversion to the process of reduction of the country.<sup>10)</sup> The Japanese, as well as the

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5) Before Xavier's landing in Japan, the country had been contacted by António da Mota and two other companions who set foot in the island of Tanegashima. They were followed by Jorge Álvares in 1546 who came with three ships. On the latter's return to Malacca in 1547, Xavier learned about Japan and thought it was a country ruled by a king who was aided by fourteen lords (dukes).

6) Subrahmanyam, S., *The Portuguese Empire in Asia, 1500-1700: a Political and Economic History*, London: Longman, 1993, p. 103.

7) It was Sumitada who in 1580 ceded Nagasaki "in perpetuity" to the Society of Jesus.

8) Nobunaga was keen to unite Japan. He took control of the province of Owari in 1559, captured the capital in 1568 and sought to eliminate the militant and influential Pure Land sects, particularly the Ikko sect (Pure Land Sect).

9) Murdoch, J., *A History of Japan, with maps by I. Yamagata*, Asiatic Society of Japan: Yokohama, Kelly & Walsh, 1903-26, vol. II, p. 301.

10) Owing to their hold on whole populations, the *daimyos* religious preferences were

Chinese, believed that the Portuguese had the Jesuits in their pockets, as Spence noted. However, ways were found to circumvent the edict and in the end it was not enforced.

One may contend that the *Society of Jesus*<sup>11)</sup> was for many years the unofficial representative in many Oriental lands of the small Iberian monarchy, which had allied itself with, or followed closely in the path of, Portuguese conquest.<sup>12)</sup> But being markedly endowed with a littoral mentality which prevented further incursions and more stable settlements into the interior of their lands in the *ultramar*, the Portuguese did not or could not seek territorial conquest *per se* in Japan or in China. This fact set the tone for a free Jesuit operation in the area in whatever way they chose, and in this the Portuguese 'littoral mentality' greatly benefited the Jesuit 'ministry of consolation' in East Asia.

Earlier, the Portuguese had approached the Chinese after their taking of Malacca.<sup>13)</sup> In 1521 they attempted to open a more direct trade to the disapproval of the Ming censor Ho Ao who thought that Portuguese trade off South China would lead to fighting and bloodshed.<sup>14)</sup> However, by 1533 the Portuguese appeared to have

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followed by their vassals. Hence, by 1579 an estimated 100,000 people were converted.

11) The adopted name only became established in 1537 at Vicenza, and was taken to mean an association as in the word *compagnia* (*societas*). See O'Malley, J.W., *The First Jesuits*, Boston: Harvard University Press, 1995, p. 34.

12) Rowbotham, A.H., *Missionary and Mandarin: The Jesuits at the Court of China*, London: Russel & Russel, 1966, p. 53.

13) Diogo Mendes de Vasconcelos had been sent by the Crown in 1510 to the East to open direct trade with Malacca. In 1517 the Portuguese arrived in Canton, and it was Fernão Peres d'Andrade who led the first official embassy from the Crown to the King of China. In 1519, Simão de Andrade landed at Tumão (Tunmen), and behaving arrogantly, he is said to have harassed the local population. According to the Portuguese protocol, a salute of few rounds was fired and thus began, to the astonishment of the Chinese, "the long series of misunderstandings, mutual distrust, and contempt...between China and the West." See Franke, W., *China and the West*, Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1967, pp. 21, 26-29.

14) Fok, K. C., 'Early Ming Images of the Portuguese', *Portuguese Asia, Aspects in History and Economic History*, ed. by R. Ptak, Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, p. 145. Early in their contact with the Chinese in Fukien and Chekiang, the Portuguese would be depicted as kidnappers, slave traders and consumers of human flesh (especially of the children whom they were believed to cook). This perception was transferred to the

established a base in Canton. Since the region was fairly prone to pirate incursions, it is not surprising to note that the Europeans also participated in clandestine trade (from the late 1540s to early 1550s). The height of Japanese pirate activity in South China, was between 1552-1556 when Macao was leased to the Portuguese. It is estimated that about 100,000 pirates were active off the coast of China and the Yang-tze valley.<sup>15)</sup> By 1570 the Portuguese were allowed to settle in Macao and to systematise intra-Asian trade, as they instituted the *não do trato*, or the Great Ship of Amacon to operate between Macao and Nagasaki, which had become a Jesuit centre.

Religiously speaking, the *Indie Orientale* could not have a more remarkable missionary in the person of Francis Xavier, who initiated the mission beyond Goa to reach Kagoshima on 15 April, 1549. As we will note when discussing the *Spiritual Exercises*, Xavier's goal was to realise Loyola's vision of the saving of souls -- an activity characterised as a ministry of consolation and largely honed by what nowadays one may simply call cultural accommodation. With a policy of reaching always to the top and working down to the general people -- a *modus operandi* so convincingly employed by Ricci at the end of the same century -- Xavier, and later Valignano, tried to win the suzerain and, if and when possible, console the vassal. The only difference is that Ricci launched and consistently supported his ministry as if he were a literatus. This he realised after the writing of his little book of maxims called *On Friendship*, which we will discuss a little later.

Therefore the most enlightened Jesuits in the East were following a well-devised pattern, as the Jesuit *Constitutions* taught that greater good could be achieved by influencing the people who were in a position to exert influence over others. The finest examples endorsing this view were the King of Portugal and Sicily's viceroy, Juan de Vega, who became highly receptive of the Jesuit order in their respective territories.

Boxer, in his *Portuguese Merchants and Missionaries in Feudal Japan*, cites Diogo de Couto, who said that the Moors might have been right in their

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Jesuits early in the mission.

15) Boxer, C.R., *The Christian Century in Japan, 1549-1650*, University of California Press, 1951, pp. 483-490.



judgement, according to which the Portuguese won the Indies as gentlemen and lost them as merchants.<sup>16)</sup> The Lusitan *padroado* being so much interconnected with the Christian Century in Japan (1542-1640) was an enterprise powered by a monopoly not of territorial but temporal conquest in the Macao-Nagasaki sea-route.<sup>17)</sup> But it also represented unprecedented spiritual inroads both in Japan and, to a lesser extent, in China. The Jesuits who were naturally under the *padroado* shared the mentality of the times: support from above represented the fastest way to a conducive Christianisation of a given region. This was perfectly clear, as we have suggested, in the way the Jesuits launched and accommodated their mission in China. In time, however, they tried to distance themselves from a temporally oriented Portuguese mercantile and political enterprise, lest they should be accused and ousted from the country, which sometimes happened.<sup>18)</sup> In Japan, however, the Jesuits were frequently accused of trading and pocketing the profits for their private ends; a similar accusation suffered by the Dutch Protestant pastors later in Formosa, who traded deer-skins to Japan from 1640 to 1661. Franciscans and Dominicans did not fail to chastise the impossible combination of God and Mammon: *nemo potest duobus dominis servire*.

Upon entering Japan Xavier was impressed with the people, whom he considered of a high moral standard and prepared to be brought into Catholic teaching. The Jesuit work under Xavier was an extraordinary success, although it was not achieved without his ruffling personal and religious susceptibilities in Japan. The Buddhist authorities strongly resented Jesuit proselytising. Their complaints put forth before the *daimyos* led to the transfer of the missionary work to Sakai, then an independent village. However, similarly to the process of political degradation

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16) Ibid., p. 10.

17) It was the *Infante Dom Henrique*, Master of the Order of Christ, who created the Portuguese Crown missionary *padroado*, the *Padroado da Ordem de Cristo*, which became *padroado real* under *Dom Manuel*.

18) On 25 July, 1587, the Japanese national unifier Toyotomi Hideyoshi promulgated a decree prohibiting the propagation of Catholic teaching and ordered the ousting of all foreign priests from the land within twenty days, on pain of death. The edict, however, was not strictly enforced. See Sansom, G., *A History of Japan, 1334-1615*. London: The Cresset Press, 1961, p. 347.

which eventually overtook Goryeo dynasty's Buddhism in the Korean peninsula -- as we will note in the next chapters -- , Buddhism in Japan had for centuries taken a militant stance and thus become religiously unattractive. The Jesuits and their teaching offered a new sense of dignity and consolation which paralleled the *samurai* code of conduct. Indeed, despite the grinding waves of persecutions that swept through from time to time, many of those who had grown in spirit remained devoted.<sup>19)</sup>

If when Xavier arrived in Japan the country was in turmoil, when Valignano left it in 1603, Toyotomi Hideyoshi, Oda Obunaga's successor, had already unified it under his authority. This was a path somehow followed by his successor, Tokugawa Ieyasu (1534-1616) who restored the Shogunate. Hideyoshi died in 1598, the same year the Japanese troops in Joseon prepared to leave the country in defeat. When both *Imjinwoeran* and *Jeongyujaeran* came to an end, Joseon was mostly in ruin. When the next Japanese supreme lords established themselves and gained control over the country, the house of the Tokugawas managed a deliberate campaign to subdue the Catholic missions. Japan then peacefully entered a period of complete isolation from the outside world which lasted for over two centuries: the Tokugawa Shogunate.<sup>20)</sup>

The *padroado* was challenged by the Spanish who settled in the Philippines in 1593. In direct contradiction of Papal decisions, the religious orders there refused to accept that they could not enter the Japan Mission. Politically and ecclesiastically that area was part of the *padroado*; in addition, the Papacy had decreed that only the Jesuits should work there. However, the whole region was now under a single *padroado*, under a Spanish king. Hence, the Franciscans friars landed in Japan in the same year. It did not take much for them to bring themselves themselves Hideyoshi as envoys from *Don* Gomes Peres de Morinas, the Spanish governor who had settled in the Philippines. Despite protests, the Lisbon-Goa-Macao-Nagasaki

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19) It is estimated that more than 200,000 Christians suffered martyrdom in Japan.

20) The Tokugawa Shogunate was founded by Ieyasu, and achieved stability during the rule of the third Shogun, Iemitsu. Tsunayoshi, the fifth Shogun, brought complete stability to Japan by the end of his rule, during the Genroku period (1688-1703). He greatly favoured agriculture and commerce.



sea-route and the exclusive right to evangelical work thus began to disintegrate. Macao's Portuguese commercial monopoly in the lucrative Japan trade was gradually challenged and finally broken decades later.

### III. The Spiritual Exercises

Ignatius of Loyola's conversion -- or spiritual growth -- as it will be reflected in the *Exercises*, started with the reading of books on the lives of the saints and the *Imitation of Christ*. Apparently, this led him to a deepening process of contemplative subjectivity, perhaps in a way similar to the concept of *kunja*, "profound person" in the East.<sup>21)</sup> In this regard, Loyola's conversion symbolised the process in which an individual mystically immersed himself to become wholly transformed, as a "profound person." One may assume that by then the principles of the *Spiritual Exercises* were laid.<sup>22)</sup> The work would appear during the period Loyola stayed at a small town nearby Barcelona (1522-1523). Two favoured themes kept recurring in his mind: the Kingdom of God and the Two Standards (of Christ and the devil).

The *Exercises* is a work envisioned as a process one would be led, following four weeks of inner reflections and the anticipated change of heart. Thus, if the exercitant kept the right attitude through the First Week, he or she would be filled with gratitude and hope, rather than fear, by turning from sin and, in inner consolation, would surrender to God's will. In consolation, one takes a reassuring step forward and attain a clarification of insight, since God's presence, it is believed, should irradiate from within the individual soul. What Loyola meant by consolation is firstly, a rising of internal enthusiasm (in the literal sense of a god that

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21) *Gunja* (君子), the Chinese notion of the noble person was defined by Tu Wei Ming as a "profound person", who in the path of self-cultivation delves into a personal process of mystical subjectivity, as if in "an unceasing attempt to delve deeply into the bedrock of one's existence." Ming, T.W., *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1989, p. 35.

22) Despite the avowed difficulty to place the *Exercises* in a category amongst the works which may have influenced it, in the end it represents Loyola's own process of spiritual growth.

awakens from within); secondly, the feeling or sorrow, as when one sheds tears inspired by love of the Lord, whether it be sorrow for sins or because of the Passion of Christ; thirdly, any increase of faith, hope, and charity and any interior joy that calls and attracts to heavenly things.<sup>23)</sup> If one grows in the service of God and thus receives spiritual nourishment which leads the soul to make further progress, one may find oneself out of times of desolation.

The ideal exercitant would have naturally come from the Catholic tradition, but nothing prevented a pagan to be, by themselves, introduced into the conversation with God. On the contrary, Jerónimo Nadal, who helped in the framing of the *Constitutions* early in 1552, was of the opinion that the *Exercises* could and, as the missionary work advanced, should be adapted to the pagans, for in being instructed through the *Exercises* one was being taught to love God above all things, with all the heart, all the mind, the soul, and the strength. Indeed, O'Malley even mentions that in the early days of the Society, a few Protestants did in fact make the *Exercises*.<sup>24)</sup>

Once the person successfully passed through the First Week, and the following three weeks of deepening spiritual growth, the way would be cleared to the embodiment of virtues which would serve as a guiding principle for the ideal Jesuit. Ultimately, the Jesuits anticipated a change of heart as prescribed in the *Exercises*. However, the first Jesuits generally did not believe that argumentation and reasoning would in themselves accomplish their desired end for all methods should lead to a familiar conversation with God, the "core of vitality" -- conducted in the elusive language of the heart -- and expressed, in inner appropriation of truth, through the Jesuits mystical theology.<sup>25)</sup> This is strikingly similar to Jean Luc Marion and Lao Tzu's 'ontology without language':

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23) Loyola, I., *Spiritual Exercises*, trans. A. Mottola, New York: Image Books, 1964, pp. 130-131. Insofar as Loyola's meaning of *consolation* unfolds itself from internal enthusiasm, which in mystical love may blaze through the realm of existential sorrow and attract or return itself to heavenly things -- as if "to retire in peace and quiet in Christ our Lord" -- one can say this qualified consolation betokens, or is a "keyword" for *jeonghan*.

24) O'Malley, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

25) *Ibid.*, pp. 48, 71.

Now what is Tao? It is something elusive and yet contains within itself a substance. Shadowy and dim, yet it contains within itself a core of vitality. The core of vitality is very real. It contains within itself an unfailing sincerity. Throughout the ages its name has been preserved in order to recall the beginning of all things. How do I know the ways of all things at the beginning? By what is within me.<sup>26)</sup>

However, the famed way of proceeding of the Jesuits would have to be largely adapted, as we shall see, as it approached, through Matteo Ricci, the rationally ethical empire of Ming China. The "core of vitality" would largely mean a 'core of rationalism.'

#### IV. Yi Joseon and the Japanese Invasions

*The tears of the women, the abandonment of children and families: this inward-looking, stinging pain from such a heartfelt separation; truly, words seem to die away if one tries to explain them vividly.<sup>27)</sup>*

In the fourteenth century the Goryeo dynasty suffered the incursions of the *woe* Japanese pirates -- which had in fact started as early as the reign of King Gojong (r. 1213-1259) -- and the invasion of Chinese forces called Red Turbans in 1359 and 1361. Though the *woe* marauders were only lightly armed, their attacks became more frequent towards 1350, and they were able to scare away entire populations from the coastal lands who abandoned their homes and cultivated fields. Maritime traffic came to a halt and attacks on Ganghwa island on the Yellow Sea and the royal capital, Gyeseong, brought the kingdom to the verge of economic collapse.

The Goryeo King sent emissaries to Japan at various times, but that island

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26) *Tao Tse Ching*, ch. 21. Quoted in Cheng, C. Y., 'Logic and Language in Chinese Philosophy', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 14, 1987, p. 300.

27) Frois, L., *Historia de Japam*, 5 vols., Lisboa: Biblioteca Nacional e Ministério da Cultura e Coordenação Científica e Secretaria de Estado da Cultura, 1984, p. 538. "*As lágrimas das mulheres, o desamparo dos filhos e das famílias: esta dor íntima e penetrante de tão caro sentido apartamento, certo que parece desfalecem palavras para ao vivo as poder explicar.*"

nation was unable to control its own sea lanes. In the meantime, there appeared some more resolute leadership in Goryeo, and figures like Yi Seong-gye who became the first Joseon king (r.1392-1398) under the title of Daejo, Choe Yong and Choe Mu-seon managed to respond more effectively to and impair *woe* offensives. The south-eastern island of Tsushima was somewhat subjugated by the Koreans so that piracy on the continental coast became much less frequent. Nevertheless, the Goryeo dynasty was coming to an end and the emerging figure of Yi Song Kye soon let his views become law. The new political faction went on to confiscate the great Buddhist estates -- the monasteries and extensive plots of land -- and create a new land system called *gwajeonbop*, which was a fundamental move in order to reform and centralise the distribution of land. Yi Seong-gye's political allies naturally received substantial allocation of land, as the state's socioeconomic control was gradually amended. Under this economic restructuring Goryeo dynasty's former structure disintegrated and a new system was eventually established and further solidified under King Daejong (r.1400-1418).<sup>28)</sup>

Although the system still remained nominally in the hands of the new Goryeo king Gongyang, effective control of the country laid on Yi Seong-gye and his faction. Eminent scholars like Jeong Mong-ju, however, opposed the ascension of Yi as the new king, on ethical grounds. Not surprisingly he was assassinated by one of Yi's sons. King Gongyang eventually abdicated and Yi Seong-gye became the founder of a new dynasty in 1392. With it Seongnihak -- Neo-Confucianism -- or Chu Hsi's School of Principle and Nature, became the leading ideological force in the land. The new dynasty was named Joseon by the Ming emperor, as the peninsula had been known in ancient times, and the capital moved from Gyeseong to Hanyang (modern Seoul).

Political strife, as we will note in the next chapter, appears as a recurrent pattern throughout the lifetime of the dynasty. Nevertheless, the agreed date of 1575, signalling the start of *dangjaeng* (黨爭) -- party strife -- in the dynasty, is perhaps the date for the institutionalised groupings within the highest political echelons of the nation.

Taken captive in a state of party claims and personal susceptibilities,

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28) Han, W. K., *The History of Korea*, Seoul: Eul-Yoo Publishing Company, 1970, p. 207.

Joseon's *yangban* bureaucracy and the *seonbi* class entered a period of spiraling confrontation and fragmentation. The political parties, accustomed to their own self-sustaining manoeuvres, machinations, and temporising measures, behaved in such a way that it is not difficult to see a point in James Murdoch's rather astringent portrayal of Joseon's court of nobles. Since that day, to quote the British historian, "every man had been fighting for his own hand, and plotting and intriguing dirtily for his own wretched self, and even with the enemy [the Japanese] sweeping the country with fire and sword the filthy cabals still went on."<sup>29)</sup>

When the Japanese troops landed in Pusan and marched on to Mungyeong, nearly half way from Hanyang, the King did not hesitate to flee to the north. The people, we learned, were infuriated at the court's incompetence and irresponsibility.<sup>30)</sup>

The Portuguese Jesuit Luis Frois, in his voluminous *Historia de Japam* dedicated ten chapters (70-80) to the first incursion into Joseon which took place in 1592.<sup>31)</sup> Frois conducted rather competent studies of Japanese language, and so he was able to meet the Shogun and interpret for Valignano in the latter's interview with Nobunaga. In 1585 he officially received the order to write a history of Japan. It is a unique first-hand account of a sympathetic Jesuit who was able to witness epoch-making events in the history of his host country. Viewed in this light, Murdoch's rather caustic remarks cannot thoroughly do justice, for example, to Frois' heart rending account of "the tears of the [Japanese] women."<sup>32)</sup>

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29) Murdoch, J., *op. cit.*, p. 314. In a letter to the editor Asidan Foster-Carter, director of Korea Project at the University of Leeds pointed out that "factionalism is nothing new [for] blind factionalism has been Korea's curse for centuries." As evidence he offered the comments of two scholars, Yi Ik (1681-1762), a Namin, and Yi Jung-hwan (1690-1752). But as we have seen, the "curse" appears to be only another name for a familiar plot, acted out much earlier. For Mr Carter's letter, see *Korea Herald*, 11 November, 1997, p.6.

30) Lee K.B., *A New History of Korea*, Boston: Harvard University Press, 1989, p. 210.

31) In Korean, the first incursion is called *Imjinwoeran*, where *Imjin* (壬辰) is the name of the year (1592), and *woeran* (倭亂), the Japanese disruption; and *Jeongyujaeran* (丁酉再亂), the second repeat invasion in 1597.

32) Despite his colourful account of *Imjinwoeran* and *Jeongyujaeran* Murdoch's rendition remains the most detailed English version of both campaigns. Frois's chapters in *Historia de Japam* were written from a Jesuit standpoint describing the first invasion.

Toyotomi Hideyoshi already brought Japan under a central government. His immense military strength soon led him to look beyond the Korea Strait. Frois briefly described the morale of those who had to comply with his ambitions. *Quambaco*, as Frois termed Hideyoshi, was an individual of rare prudence and lively reasoning, so how could he persuade himself -- asked Frois -- to attempt such a daring and frightful enterprise, the invasion of Joseon? Quambaco was risking the very stability of the newly reduced and unified Japan. Would all the kings, princes, and lords agree to leave their kingdoms, properties, wives, sons, relatives and serfs? And for what purpose? "Death", Frois sentenced, "as if it were already put before one's eyes."<sup>33)</sup>

The Portuguese Jesuit listed the difficulties which could have persuaded lesser leaders of the impossibility, if not sheer madness of the military campaign. Firstly, there was a strong possibility that the Japanese nobility would rebel. Secondly, the Japanese *ab initio* had never fought against other nations -- they were wholly ignorant of seaward lanes; had no knowledge of navigation or the enemy's language and lands. Thirdly, since the mission should be fought by traversing the sea, the lords of remote provinces could not have access to ships, manpower or the commodities necessary for sea navigation. Fourth, even if they wished to arrange for the ships and get hold of ammunition and daily necessities, there was no time to guarantee their acquisition. All in all, it might have seemed preferable to kill oneself in Japan rather than attempt certain death in foreign lands. However, everyone seemed filled with awe and fear of Quambaco, so much so that the air was charged with that,

strange respect and excessive fear and reservation with which all princes and lords devout to Quambaco. No one under any circumstance would dare to show such irreverence and liberty, neither in person nor through a third party nor in written form. No one would dare to challenge, in the least thing, his view or determination. Rather, once before him they would applaud his deliberations [by employing] many words, saying it [the military campaign] was an egregious feat, an extraordinary work, itself worthy of eternal memory: to start such a noble, rational and well-orchestrated enterprise.<sup>34)</sup>

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33) Ibid., p. 537.



The campaign Hideyoshi carefully planned and launched in the Korean peninsula may have led him to find a good use for some of his 'Christian troops', thus fitting a dual purpose in his self-declared theatre of operations: the conquest of Ming China and the suppression of Japanese Christians who would either perish or, in the event of a consummate victory, be employed not in Japan but in Joseon, a view also recorded by Frois. The grand plans for a Pan-Asian empire were present in his mind, it is argued, since at least 1577.<sup>35)</sup>

However, after visiting Hideyoshi at Osaka in 1586, Frois noted that Hideyoshi motives for the war of occupation were stated as follows: a clear desire to obtain territories which would supply new opportunities for military campaigns and thus reward his restless generals; control over the East Asian trade and commerce, and beyond that, a nearly boundless ambition. He did tolerate the Jesuits and tried to count on their assistance if and when he started the military campaign. He was not looking for new territories *per se*, though they would by force come as a natural consequence. Hideyoshi was a visionary, who in the last five years of his life let this vision turn into an obsession. Thus he seemed set "solely upon immortalising himself with the name and fame of his power."<sup>36)</sup>

In 1590, two years before the first military campaign, Hideyoshi more clearly advanced the idea of conquering China. The *daimyo* of Tsushima, obeying Hideyoshi's instructions, had already sent a messenger to Joseon court in 1587, but to no avail. In the following spring, the *daimyo* himself and two other people left for Joseon, conveying to the King a message informing him that Hideyoshi was displeased with the fact that no Joseon emissaries had been sent to Japan. Hence, in April of 1590, following the capture of Joseon nationals who co-operated with the

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34) Ibid. *"estranho respeito, e excessivo temor e acatamento que todos os principes e senhores tem a Quambaco, que nenhum cazo houve pessoa alguma que se atrevesse a ter tal audacia e liberdade, que nem por sy nem por...terceira pessoa, nem por escrito ouzasse a contradizer-lhe na minima couza seu parecer e determinação. Antes assintindo diante dele aplaudião sua deliberação com muitas palavras, dizendo que era feito egregio e obra estupenda, e digna de perpetua memoria commetter tão nobre, racional e bem concertada empreza."*

35) *Kodansha Encyclopedia of Japan*. Tokyo: Kondansha, Ltd., 1983, vol. III, p. 326.

36) Ibid.

*woe* (Japanese) pirates, the King dispatched three envoys to that island country. The emissaries returned to Joseon in the company of two Japanese officials and delivered the letter to the King who remained unmoved. His answer emphasised that Joseon had followed law and right from the earliest times, and the relationship between China and Joseon was that of parent and child. Why should Japan not recognise China's suzerainty? To the Japanese emissaries, the King commented that Hideyoshi was like a bee trying to sting a tortoise through its armour.

In reality, however, Joseon was in little position to understand the Japanese threat. In contrast to the military aristocracy that Japan had developed under Nobunaga, Hideyoshi and Ieyasu, Joseon was divided into two classes. According to Murdoch, the nobles -- the yangban -- were "leisured and learned, but effeminate," whereas the rest were "a horde of slaves who were passed from hand to hand like landed property." A child would inherit the class of its mother, so there were many examples of yangban fathers, who composed the upper strata of society, whose children were prohibited to ascend to a higher status. But Murdoch failed to note that social classes in Joseon were in fact distinguished in terms of status and duties. The yangban constituted the upper class, whose sole profession was the holding of public office, and it alone enjoyed a variety of privileges and married only amongst themselves. The *jung-in* (中人) were the petty clerks and local civil functionaries. One cannot see in them a middle class in the sense we understand that term. There was also a class of peasants who enjoyed an independent and semi-independent status called *yangmin* (良民) or *sangmin* (常民) -- free-born commoners. Next came the lowborn class of slaves. Also, there were government slaves: those who had to offer compulsory work and those who had to pay a tax in lieu of labour service. Privately owned slaves were divided in household slaves and out-resident slaves. The latter were obliged to pay a fixed tax to their respective owners. The yangban and the *cheonmin* (賤民) -- lowborn class -- were strictly hereditary. Also classed as lowborns were the *gwangdae* and *sadang*, who were travelling bands of entertainers.

Luis Frois also observed in his *Historia de Japam* that "the wisest" in the Japan detested the proposed expedition to Joseon, which they viewed as a punitive expedition. In their eyes, Hideyoshi clearly wished to send many feudal lords to the



peninsula and keep some undesirable ones there, by giving new fiefs there while depriving them of their old ones in Japan.<sup>37)</sup> But no one had the courage or dared to challenge Hideyoshi, who proceeded to make Nagoya in Hizen his general headquarters during the military campaign. In addition to a naval force, the Japanese sent ten divisions amounting to some 190,000 to 200,000 men to Joseon. Amongst these, Konishi Yukinaga, referred to as Agostinho by Frois, was the Christian general who spearheaded the first Japanese invasion, by leading a 18,700-strong unit composed almost entirely of Christians. He and his troops landed in Pusan on 24 of May 1592. On 12 of June he was already in Hanyang, and learned that the King had fled only four days before.

Joseon was a nation entirely unprepared for the conflict, but the populace eventually mustered some strength and started to challenge the invading troops. In their favour was the hilly geography of the country which lent itself to guerrilla warfare. Konishi and reinforcement troops, almost all Christians, met in Pyeongyang and waited for new instructions. The Japanese advance towards China was retarded, however, by the actions of the Joseon Admiral Yi Sun Shin in the south.<sup>38)</sup>

As for the Chinese, at first they had thought the Korean court was in collusion with the Japanese, whereas the Koreans hoped for Chinese reinforcements to support the strong resistance of the native population. In 1594 the Chinese convinced the Koreans reluctantly to consent to peace. Meanwhile Hideyoshi, declared himself as the great victor: "the chief of the Mings was to acknowledge me the Ming Emperor."<sup>39)</sup> To his hands, however, came a Chinese imperial indictment urging him to defend the frontiers of the Ming Empire. He was furious.

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37) Quoted in Minakawa S., *Christian Activities, Persecutions, and Revival in Japan (1549-1873)*, 1968, p. 26. Minakawa observes that Frois account of the first invasion diverges from the one currently accepted in Japan, which is not cause of surprise. However, it is a justifiable account to the present-day student of history, for in his writing there are few mistakes either in personal or geographical names -- and Minakawa concludes, "They are too realistic for serious historical works and too correct for fiction..." Ibid., p. 28.

38) For fuller details, see Y.H. Park, *Admiral Yi Sun-shin and his turtleboat Armada*, Seoul: Hunjin Publishing Co., 1978.

39) Sansom, G., *op. cit.*, p. 363.

If in the Kyushu campaign against Shimazu and in his dealings with the Kanto lords Hideyoshi had shown superb diplomacy and efficiency, the same was not true insofar as his dealings with the Chinese was concerned. He failed in the first campaign and despite all evidence to the contrary, he still thought that China could be won over. Joseon was the theatre of operations and as such suffered the most, both due to the Japanese, and to a lesser extent the Ming forces stationed in the country, and the infirmity of Joseon's own crown.

When the 142,000 Ming reinforcement troops arrived during this second invasion, or *Jongyujaeran*, they apparently brought some Portuguese divers on their heels. The supreme Chinese commander was General Hyeonggae who assembled the Ming forces, at that time scattered all over Joseon, in Hanyang. These troops withdrew from the country on 15 April 1599.<sup>40)</sup> But in 1598 Hideyoshi died and with him the dream of conquering East Asia. It was, as Jesuit sources evaluated, an unjust war. The disastrous campaigns in the Korean peninsula did not bring him political or material gain since, as Frois put it, he had plenty enough of both, but it apparently served to feed his pride, itself always linked to vainglory. Hideyoshi seemed beyond temperate reaction, and "his strength and that of Japan was corrupted in the pursuit of empire and the immortality of his name."<sup>41)</sup>

## V. The China Mission

### *a. Valignano, the Visitor (1539 -1606)*

Born in Chieti in 1539, Valignano studied law at Padua University and entered the Society of Jesus in 1566 in somewhat strange circumstances. He was

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40) During the evacuation Hyeonggae requested King Sunjo to send a painter who could portray their departure so that the General could take it back to China as evidence of his successful achievements in Joseon. The paintings are contained in the *Saejon Seohwacheob* (世傳書畫帖) which was recently discovered in Andong, South Korea. There are captions on their back to explain the circumstances under which they were made. One caption reads, "Four sea-demons [*haegwi*] from *Bullangguk* [佛郎國]", which is one of the various names Portugal was known in China.

41) Berry, M. E., *Hideyoshi*, Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1982, p. 216.

appointed visitor of the Jesuit missions in Asia -- except the Phillipines -- in 1573.

The development of the Jesuit mission, boldly advanced by Francis Xavier, took more definite shape in the figure of the Visitor to the Indies, Alessandro Valignano. If in Japan Xavier had devised an original method of evangelisation which stressed the "superior and potentially accommodating Western conception in a pagan cultural milieu,"<sup>42)</sup> Valignano, in his turn, elaborated a more systematic approach. In his efforts to delineate a factual and normative missionary engagement particularly within the Macao-Japan route, Valignano may be wrongly accused of having assumed autocratic powers.<sup>43)</sup> In fact his powers, it is arguable, were granted by virtue of the office he took in the East. As visitor of the Society of Jesus in the East, he enjoyed complete authority and did not need to assume absolute power, for he already had acquired it legitimately. More significant was the manner in which he exercised his authority: he emphasised that the Superiors of the Society ought to govern with love, rather than severity or better still, by *koinonia* -- sensitivity to the needs of others.<sup>44)</sup> Ignatius of Loyola's 'way of proceeding', true to its spirit, informed the Jesuit mission by encouraging the accommodation to the local temperament, which in Portuguese was transliterated as *catangues* (氣質). Valignano fostered this kind of spirit in the old Japanese mission.

The importance Valignano had for the overall missionary enterprise was indeed vital, for as we know he strongly supported the method of accommodation Matteo Ricci subsequently articulated in Ming China. Both in terms of ideal and mission, Valignano and Ricci were always close: from 1582 to 1610 Ricci worked out the principles which Valignano enunciated in Japan. A fine example of this was Ricci's first-hand reading of Valignano's book *Il Cerimoniale, or Advertimentos*, written in Japan. This particular approach attempted to supplement and in Ricci's case, also closely relate Catholic teaching to the Three Teachings (三教).

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42) Nakayama, S., *A History of Japanese Astronomy, Chinese Background and Western Impact*, Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1969, p. 81.

43) Moran, J. F., *The Japanese and the Jesuits: Alessandro Valignano in Sixteenth Century Japan*, London: Routledge, 1993., p. 21.

44) I Cor 10:15-16.

Herein comes the relevance of Valignano's policy of inculturation: he was convinced that the mission should focus on an approach directly adapted to a country's national language and culture, to its catangues. This was something Franciscans and Dominicans viewed with suspicion, even contempt. Eventually, when these religious orders entered Japan two decades later Valignano's *modus operandi* proved correct.

Valignano's staunch support for a policy which emphasised conformity to the catangues may be said to constitute an epitome of Xavier's insight: becoming a follower of Jesus entailed neither becoming Portuguese nor ceasing to be Japanese. Likewise, the act of coming to an understanding with the Japanese, by boldly adopting some of the Japanese catangues, as these were religiously and socially observed by the bonzes, entailed neither becoming 'Buddhistic' nor breaking the Jesuit vows.

#### *b. Outlining the Approach*

During his first visit to Japan in 1581, Valignano travelled to Bungo, where he stayed for two or three weeks, and there he sought help in the construction of monasteries. Bungo was a province where the Jesuits worked and the mission flourished under the protection of a Christian lord -- *daimyo*. Before leaving the place he composed the *Advertimentos*, or the *Il Cerimoniale* in "a day and a night" (*un giorno ed una notte*).<sup>45)</sup> It appears that the work was originally dictated in Portuguese by Valignano<sup>46)</sup>, "written around 1585" (*composto intorno al 1585*).<sup>47)</sup> It has seven chapters and towards the end is a revised form of the first chapter.<sup>48)</sup>

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45) *ICMG*, p. 79.

46) *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

47) *Ibid.*, p. 7.

48) It begins with its title and a preamble, "Advertimentos e Avisos acerca dos Costumes e Catangues de Jappão", which is followed by *Chapter I*, "Do modo que se ha de ter pera adquirir e conservar autoridade tratando com os Jappoens"; *Chapter II*, "Do modo que se ha de ter para fazer familiares os christãos"; *Chapter III*, "Dos Comprimentos que os padres e irmãos han de ter com os forasteyros"; *Chapter IV*, "Da maneira que se a de ter en dar e tomar *sacanzuque* [vaso por onde beben, or a bottle from which rice wine was shared] e *sacana* [side dish]";

There, Valignano summarised this policy by paraphrasing St. Ambrose (c.339-397): *Dum fueris Romae, romano vivito more.*<sup>49)</sup>

By themselves, the *Advertimentos* did not constitute the general theory of accommodation employed in Japan early during the missionary work. They were in fact thoughtful advices concerning the catangues via-à-vis the prevalent Buddhist order of that country. Valignano put a strong emphasis on *modos* or catangues by which the Padres and Irmãos should behave. It was necessary that they could "know well what their dignity is, in order that it corresponds with the dignities and honours enjoyed by the bonzes, so that they [the Fathers and the Irmãos] can relate with them and with other Japanese lords."<sup>50)</sup> Indeed, Valignano was convinced that Padres and Irmãos were the "bonzes of Christian religion" (*bonzos da relegião christã*) so it was advisable that they put themselves "... at the same level as the bonzes of the Genxus sect."<sup>51)</sup>

The Visitor never failed to remind the Order to keep the 'way of proceeding', itself conducive to the mission and the status of its representatives:

both the Fathers and the Irmãos [shall pay] much attention to modesty and religious gravity...[by not behaving] lightly through acts and movements which show little respect and little gravity: and thus, they shall be moderate while walking, shall not be caught in haste, nor turn easily to and fro, nor laugh aloud and unrestrainedly, though they shall always wear a suave, happy face...nobody shall leave without the *dobuco*... One shall refrain from fishing with hooks in the rivers...all these things greatly unsettle the Japanese and the credit and respect one shall have towards the Padres.<sup>52)</sup>

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*Chapter V*, "Do modo que se ha de ter no tratar dos padres e irmãos e entre ssi [e] com os demais de casa"; *Chapter VI*, "Do modo que se ha de ter em agazalhar embaixadores ou pessoas de respeito e dos convites que se hão de fazer"; *Chapter VII*, "Do modo que se ha de ter em fabricar nosas casas e igrejas em Japão."

49) Ibid., p. 286.

50) Ibid., pp. 123-124. In Portuguese: "*saber bem qual hé sua dignidade e em que altura se podem pôr, pera que correspomdão com as dignidades e homrras que os bomzos tem, pera poderem tratar com elles e com os mais senhores Japões.*"

51) Ibid., p. 124. Valignano was referring to Buddhism's Zen sect, introduced in Japan in 1191. The passage in Portuguese reads, "*na mesma altura em que estão os bonzos da seyta dos Genxus.*"

52) Ibid., pp. 130, 132. In Portuguese: "*... os Padres como os Irmãos [hão de ter] muita*

In order to uphold their authority, the Padres were urged to perform the ecclesiastical duties "with much reverence and outward performance" ("*com muita reverencia e apparato exterior*"); on the other hand, they ought to make the Christians "conscientious and loveable" ("*familiares e amorosos*"), otherwise nothing could be truly accomplished in the country.<sup>53)</sup> The Japanese, he argued, had lived so long with habits and customs "so depraved" that they became thoroughly ignorant "of godly things" (*acerca das cousas de Deus*). Hence it was necessary to make them *familiares* and *amorosos*, so they could slowly appreciate and understand the things that belonged to God.<sup>54)</sup>

Valignano intended that the process of conversion and the course of *Christandade* (sic) should be marked both by authority and what he termed *familiaridade* -- or the sense of awareness of the catangues -- so that one is not a stumbling block to the other, but help one another "for both have their own place."<sup>55)</sup> There were specific catangues to be observed in human relations. For the Fathers and Irmãos, "the bonze of Christian religion", Valignano devised a social hierarchy identical to that of Genxus sect, "which amongst others is considered the main sect in Japan, and which has access to all kinds of people in the country."<sup>56)</sup>

This bold move by Valignano did not fail to stir a degree of perplexity, if

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*conta com a modestia e gravidade religiosa... [não comportando-se com]... actos e movimentos leves que mostrem pouco asento e pouca gravidade: e asi han de ser moderados no andar, não indo apresurados nem virando-se facilmente a olhar de qua pera lá, nem movendo muito as mãos, quando falam, nem rindo alto e demasiadamente, ainda que devem sempre mostrar rosto alegre e suave...nao hão de sair a ninguem sem dobuco... Se hão de guardar de ir pescando com anzol polos rios... estas cousas todas desfazem grandemente com os Japõis e credito e o respeito que se há de ter aos Padres..."* The *dobuco* were clothes for travel, we are told, which were introduced from China and Hideyoshi made their use common. See, João Rodrigues, *História da Igreja do Japão*, Lisboa: part I, book I, cap. 16, 2, p.75.

53) Ibid., pp. 154, 158.

54) Ibid., p. 168.

55) Ibid., p. 120.

56) Ibid., p. 122. "...que entre todas hé tida em Japão por primcipal e que tem mais commonicaçao com toda a sorte de gente de Japão."



not keen uneasiness in both Japan and Rome. After reading the Visitor's *Advertimentos*, General Claudio Acquaviva, himself an old friend of Valignano's at the Collegio Romano back in 1568, reminded him of "our Constitution" (*le nostre Constitutione*) and did not hide a deep fear (*timore*):

while we wish to accommodate to the customs and concepts of the bonzes, insensibly...*non induat Societas in Japone aliam faciem*...if the bonzes walk on the one path, they go according to the doctrine they teach, but we, who teach a very different doctrine, we must walk on the other path, and by so doing we wish not to move away from doctrine.<sup>57)</sup>

Valignano argued that only those who were in Japan or China could really understand the state of things in their full complexity. Moreover, he explained to the General that the reports sent to Rome only testified that in Europe the enormous cultural difference did not do justice to the Japanese reality (*enormi differenze di culture portavano a farsi in Europa un quadro completamente falso della realtà giapponese*). In any case, it was imperative that the Jesuits should not incur *buzata*, or insult in the East. The *Advertimentos*, by themselves, were something good and necessary, for inasmuch as they were neglected, there was "a decline, a cooling of sympathy even amongst the faithful." The Fathers were not trying to live a life of a Roman Cardinal, Valignano argued, but heeded a dignity, modesty and decorum that suited their missionary context. With this in mind, Valignano then wrote "*alcune regole*" for the Jesuit policy of accommodation in Japan, whose spirit duly infused Ricci's approach to China.<sup>58)</sup>

### c. Ricci's Approach

Valignano appointed first Michele Ruggeri (1543-1607) for the pioneer work

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57) Ibid., pp. 319, 321. In Italian: *mentre vogliamo accommodarci ai costumi et concetti de Bonzi, insensibilmente non induat Societas in Japone aliam faciem...se i Bonzi caminano per altra strada, vanno conformi alla dottrina che insegnano, ma noi che insegnamo dottrina molto differente, bisogna che caminiamo per altra strada, se già con le opere non vogliamo dimostrare di scostarci dalla dottrina*

58) Ibid., pp. 44, 45, 53.



in China, but the latter would face tremendous difficulties to get hold of the language, not to mention a suitable instructor in Chinese. With Ricci's arrival the mission advanced with the ultimate aim of settling in the imperial capital. Ricci and Ruggeri established themselves in Zhaoqing in 1583. While maintaining a low profile in Kwangtung province, they tried to reach the literati class by emphasising, on the one hand, their deep respect for China and the Son of Heaven, and on the other, the new Western scientific knowledge of which they were representatives. Ricci presented the literati with clocks -- always a sensation -- and maps he would draw portraying Ming China always at the centre of the known world.<sup>59)</sup> Indeed, his maps were what gained him widespread fame.

Ricci's policy of accommodation was to spread the mission amongst the literati in the upper levels of society. In any given dynasty in China, native or foreign, the literati were influential through administration and their control over the throne. Some of them, following the ethical standards as contained in the Classics, even dared to turn against the Emperor, risking death or exile. Fortunately for the Jesuits, they encountered a rather benign intellectual field in which they were able to plant religious concepts which they believed were congruent with Chinese manners and ideas.

The Valignano-Ricci vineyard in China marked a tentative and studied re-inception of *Christian doctrine* in Marco Polo's Cathay, which Bento de Goes (1563-1607) had identified with China.<sup>60)</sup> It had been indeed tentative throughout its almost thirty years since Ricci's arrival in Macao, but meaningful in almost all aspects of its preferred insistence upon bringing Catholic teaching nearer to the literati. Religiously, it was in essence an idealist cultivation of minds during and after its first phase (1583-1610), and well into the Qing dynasty.<sup>61)</sup> But Ricci left an

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59) For a list of some of the objects Ricci described in one of his letters, see *OS*, vol. II, p. 208.

60) Brazão, E., *A Viagem de Bento de Goes a China*, Lisboa: 1954; Cronin, V., *The Wise Man from the West*, London: 1955, pp. 236-256.

61) By 1598, shortly before entering Beijing, the mission counted only seven members and three stations in the country. See Latourette, *op. cit.*, p. 95. By 1605 there were, however, more than two hundred neophytes only in Beijing. Through the active intervention of Valignano, the religious house Madre de Deus became the College St.

indelible mark on the door to cultural interchange he pried open.

### VI. The Three Teachings

In approximately thirty years of residence in China, Ricci was able to learn and fluently communicate in Chinese, thus composing books in Chinese seen as stylistically acceptable to the literati.<sup>62)</sup> Together with Giulio Aleni (1552-1649), at the end of Ming Dynasty, he brought a knowledge of science to the country and in so doing, opened a way to imparting religious teaching.<sup>63)</sup> While one can espouse the idea that Ricci and Aleni were accepted as equals by the highest literati because of their mastery of Mandarin Chinese and the Classics, a view sympathetically taken by Ross, the notion of equality, be it intellectual, cultural or even racial should not be taken at face value as we presently understand it. Ricci, like any other 'uncivilised', though becoming a paragon of scholarship qua Chinese thought, was indeed great as nobody else before him. The relationship between all other kingdoms and vassals, no matter how great their accomplishments, is not one of equals. The web of relations was the determining factor. This should be made very clear, as we have seen, as an enraged Hideyoshi was urged to defend the Ming boundaries following *Imjinwoeran*, to the Joseon king's bewilderment at the Japanese lord ethically unprincipled design to steer away from the older-younger brother relationship.

In September of 1584 Ricci moved to Chiaoqing and a year later reported that there were three sects in China, though he could not explain the origins of the Muslims in the country<sup>64)</sup>:

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Paul, like in Goa, where students could be instructed. See Serrão, J.V., *História de Portugal*, vol IV, Lisboa: Editorial Verbo, 1978, p. 196.

62) He arrived in Macao in 1582, and died in Beijing in 1610.

63) James, C.V., ed. *Information China*, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences: Pergamon Press, vol. III, 1989, p. 1296.

64) See *OS* vol. II, pp. 48-49. On the founding of Ming dynasty many distinguished ministers were followers of Islam. Cheng Ho, a eunuch, (1391-1435) is said to have visited many nations in Asia Africa, and reportedly made a pilgrimage to Mecca, whence he brought Maps of Celestial Mansions. *Ibid.*, p. 1297. Cheng Ho organised six

I have nothing else to say but to add something about the Chinese religions and sects. But I do not wish to avoid the argument whether there is not religion in China or not, and the few cults there are so complex that even those who practice them are incapable of explaining them. They are divided into three sects (without mentioning the Muslims, whose sect I do not know how it entered); one is called Buddhism, another, Taoism, and the third is that of the literati which is the most respected. The literati do not believe in the immortality of the soul, and deride what the other sects say about devils. They only worship [*rendono solo grazie*] heaven and earth for the benefits they receive, but they do not believe in the Beyond's celestial felicity.<sup>65)</sup>

Ricci's hermeneutic method developed in dialectic response to the main trends of Chinese religions at his time: a practical syncretism which considered elements of the "three sects", or the philosophical monism of the literati, or the search for an original reading of religion. Ricci seemed aware that the idea of Heaven did not neatly correspond to the God of the Bible, but he praised original Confucianism for its reverence of Sangje -- the Lord on High -- as the supreme deity who created and ruled all things on earth:

From all pagan sects known in Europe, I do not know of any other people who did so few mistakes as the Chinese in the beginning of their antiquity. In the beginning of their history one reads in their writings that they acknowledged and worshipped a supreme being whom they called the King of Heaven, or designated in another name indicating his role in both heaven and earth. It would seem that the ancient Chinese considered heaven and earth as something animated, and that its common soul were worshipped as a supreme deity... They also worshipped the various spirits of the mountains and rivers and the four direction of the earth. They taught that the light of reason came from heaven and that one should heed the arguments [*dettami*] of reason in every human action. In any part do we read that the

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expeditions and crossed half the earth and spread the Ming Empires influence to its greatest extent, before the great European voyages. See, *Cambridge History of China*, ed. by F.W. Mote and D. Twitchett, vol. VII, The Ming Dynasty, 1368-1644, part I, p. 236. Ricci noted, however, that the word Muhammedan (sic) also designated the Jews and other small sects.

65) OS, vol. II, pp. 48-49. My translation.

Chinese created images [*mostri dei vizio*] of that supreme being or its deity, as did the Romans, the Greek and the Egyptians who became gods or patrons of images.<sup>66)</sup>

Ricci received a great deal of attention and his company remained very much solicited for banquets where he would debate with the literati. He was esteemed as a *litteratus* from the West, whose teaching could be traced back to the Classics: his doctrine of the Lord of Heaven, it seemed, was consonant with the oldest books of China.

Philosophically, if Confucius kept silent on the possibility of a future life after death, Ricci thought he had more to say about spirit and life after death than Confucius, who taught

... While still unable to do your duty to the living, how can you do your duty to the dead?... Not yet understanding life, how can you understand death?<sup>67)</sup>

However, Confucius, the "Prince of Philosophers", whose name and title was designated Confucius in Latin by Ricci, was praised highly by the Italian Jesuit. Ricci did not find great fault with the literati sect -- a position which contrasted with former religious orders from the West, like the Franciscans, who once in China found themselves in contextual similarity with Buddhism.<sup>68)</sup> Hence, there was a deliberate effort on Ricci's part to procure intellectual channels which could air the sort of co-relation he believed existed between Confucianism and Catholic teaching.

#### a. *Approaching the Literati Tradition*

Ricci believed that the ancient Chinese, assisted as they were by "the light

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66) See OS vol II., p. 84. My translation. Ricci thought the original parity between God and Sangje became corrupted due to the influence of Buddhism, which he put, inadvertently, centuries before its arrival from India. The Lord on High, *Shang-ti* (*Sangje*), and the God of the Bible "are the same." See *TMLH*, pp. 121-123.

67) *The Analects*, 11:11, trans. by W. E. Soothill, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995, p. 61.

68) *JMR*, p. 337.

of reason", might have found religious salvation. Their history of more than four thousand years, provided "a record of good deeds done on behalf of [the] country and for the common good."<sup>69)</sup> As the ancient Chinese philosophers sought the path of virtue, they wrote books of "rare wisdom", and became, on that account, counterparts of the most distinguished Western philosophers. Thus, towards the end of his life, he offered the following theological assessment of the Literati, whom were referred to as the "academy":

the teachings of this academy, save in some few mistakes, are so far from being contrary to Christian principles, that such an institution could derive great benefit from Christianity and might be developed and perfected by it.<sup>70)</sup>

Nevertheless, given his belief in the sin of human nature -- a doctrine of which the Chinese had no parallel -- he took the view that there were few Chinese who did not succumb to the error of atheism and other mundane vices.<sup>71)</sup> He argued that the original idea of Sangje -- who preserved and governed all things over Earth -- and the natural religious awareness of the ancients, became increasingly obscured. If the ancients had not doubted the immortality of the soul, the contemporary literati affirmed that the soul ceased to exist after death, or shortly after it.<sup>72)</sup> But Ricci's greater concern was that most of the literati showed no compunction in adhering to Buddhism, and the borrowed notion of a *corpus continuum* fusing into itself Heaven and Earth, humankind, fauna and flora, the four elements of nature, and each individual body.<sup>73)</sup> Ricci saw this as the literati's great

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69) Ibid., p. 93.

70) Ibid., p. 98.

71) Ibid., p. 341.

72) Ricci mentioned that the ancient Chinese knew of a dwelling place in Heaven. In that he was referring to Kin Wen (文王), the founder of the Chow -- or Zhou -- dynasty (1122 - 770 B.C.E) . Ibid., p. 94.

73) This was perhaps one of the biggest contentions Ricci held against Wang Yang Ming and his practical-idealistic philosophy.

error, "for they would suppose that the God of the Bible was the soul of the material universe...the one mind...of a great body."<sup>74)</sup>

According to Confucianism, the path of virtue begins with 1) the training of self (*susin*) which would 2) spur the economic security of the family, 3) generate public peace and 4) bring order in the kingdom and the universe.<sup>75)</sup> Moreover, as the Chinese themselves would have agreed, if one left the path of virtue, it would be difficult for friendship to remain.<sup>76)</sup> In all these four levels there were different human relations, which the Chinese observed, or attempted to put into practice. In this, they thought of themselves superior to foreigners, whom as 'barbarians' would be minimally aware of or neglect them altogether. Religiously speaking, however, Ricci could be at least gladly surprised to find in the words of Confucius an important paradigm described in the *Analects*, which strikingly taught the same scriptural maxim, "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you."<sup>77)</sup>

Is there any word, asked Tzu Kung, which could be adopted as a lifelong conduct? The Master replied: Is not Sympathy [reciprocity] the word? Do not do to others what you would not like yourself.<sup>78)</sup>

But Ricci had a poor understanding of the Oriental religious *jeong*, sentiment.<sup>79)</sup> Indeed, the very Chinese way of writing, thinking and reasoning differed markedly from Western categories. In all of these different levels of human relations, one would sense that the Chinese ways are by nature extremely allusive. Although Ricci

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74) *Ibid.*, p. 342.

75) *Ibid.*, p. 95.

76) Powell, J.G.F., *Cicero: Laelius, On Friendship & The Dream of Scipio*, XI:37, Warmister: Aris & Phillips Ltd, Teddington House, 1990, pp. 46 -47. The original passage reads, "difficile est amicitiam manere si a virtute defeceris."

77) Mt. 7:12.

78) *The Analects*, 15:23.

79) Gernet, J., 'La Société Chinoise a la fin des Ming', *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, t. 72, 1984, p. 29.

was sensitive to the intricacies of the Chinese language one may doubt his "perspicuity."<sup>80)</sup> His philosophical discourse was tied up to an Aristotelian-Scholastic world-view through which he attempted to bring the literati to a heightened religious awareness.

In translating the message, Ricci sought to assimilate Confucian terms to Christian meanings, as in his adoption of the term the Sovereign on High, Sangje. If a distortion of meaning was feared, he preferred to transliterate.<sup>81)</sup> But in so doing, transliteration must have bewildered the most ardent literatus, who could not understand a single word. Ricci also claimed that the Chinese did not distinguish between substance and accident, as the famed debate he had with a septuagenarian monk-scholar Samhoe illustrated, as briefly described below.

#### *b. Sciequia (Buddhism)*

The debate was to be guided by the "light of reason" -- a Heaven-endowed trait -- and not from authority.<sup>82)</sup> Discussing whether human nature was good, bad or neutral, the monk Samhoe construed a sentence in Chinese suggesting that human nature could be said to be both good and bad, which in this case serves to exemplify Gernet's observation about the allusiveness of the Chinese language. Ricci asked if the Sun, which always shines, could be anything but bright; human goodness, like the brightness of the sun, could only be one thing. Commenting on this argument Ricci noted: "This was a new idea to them which had great force, for the simple reason that they knew of no distinction between substance and accident."<sup>83)</sup>

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80) *The Analects*. 15:40.

81) *JMR.*, pp. 143-145. Early in 1583 Ruggeri and Pasio found the inscription *Cheonju*, Lord of Heaven, above an altar they had established in Chiaoqing. Although it seemed a convenient term, at the time no one was aware that it was a Buddhist expression designating Devapati, as well as a Taoist deity and one of the eight lords whom the first emperor of the Qing dynasty (221-206 B.C.E.) sacrificed. A similar experience took place in Japan through Xavier, who had translated God as Dainichi, the universal Buddha.

82) *Ibid.*, p. 342. Ricci argued that it was Heaven that imparted the "light of reason", which would take precedence to any human claim to authority.



The Italian father seemed aware of some of the similarities between Buddhism and Christian teaching, which he pointed out. Buddhism included some elements of Greek thought like the transmigration of souls (Pythagoras) and the multiplicity of worlds (Democritus). Another striking resemblance was the trinity (three gods fused into one deity), as well as the doctrine of reward for the good in heaven and punishment for the wicked in hell; celibacy (though a great many bonzes enjoyed a life of sexual indulgence); similar rites (Buddhist chants were almost Gregorian in nature), the use of religious icons and special robes.<sup>84)</sup>

Although Buddhism enjoyed popularity in the beginning, it lost appeal with the later literati, Ricci noted, who saw in it a cause for the country's natural misfortunes. Posterior generations received it with varying degrees of devotion. Due to the popularity of Buddhist literature, however, it seemed impossible to extinguish it. But Ricci discredited its foundations as best as he could: in the *TMLH* he devoted a whole chapter to it, and perhaps owing to the debate he had with Samhoe in Nanjing, the Italian father noted that with few exceptions, it would be very hard to find a Buddhist follower who "displayed a liking for learning and [accomplished] something by their own industry." It was, in a word, "an iniquitous cult."<sup>85)</sup> But in fact, as Gernet pointed out, Ricci seemed unwilling to examine Buddhism's philosophical grounds.<sup>86)</sup> For Ricci, original Confucianism and the evidence of an ancient religious thought were all that mattered.

c. *Lao Tzu*<sup>87)</sup>

After criticising Buddhism Ricci turned to Taoism, though again not without antipathy. He recounted one of the religious ravings about a reigning lord of heaven

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83) Ibid.

84) Ricci criticised, however, Buddhism's confused interpretation of Heaven and Hell, and the notion that there is no eternity for the departed souls.

85) Ibid., p. 101.

86) Gernet, J., *op. cit.*, p. 31.

87) *Lauzu*, as it appears in the *JMR*.

who on earth had been fooled by an interpreter of dreams. While the heavenly entity -- called Leu -- was enjoying an earthly banquet prepared especially for him, Ciam, his host, jumped on the former's white dragon and rode up to Heaven, where he took possession of the disgraced and outcast Leu. So, noted Ricci, "these poor people now admit they are venerating a false Lord [Ciam], a usurper, and a tyrant."<sup>88)</sup>

Ricci observed that Lao Tzu advanced the notion of trinity, and there was talk of a place where rewards and punishments were administered. The followers of Lao Tzu also were fond of icons, however detestable they seemed to Ricci. They believed they could be taken physically into Heaven through special exercises and incantations aimed at increasing concentration and speeding the heavenly ascension. Taoism, explained Ricci, was politically active within the royal temples, where its priests accompanied all sacrifices made by the Son of Heaven. In the *TMLH* Ricci refuted Buddhism and Taoism's views concerning the origin of the world, the details of which we will discuss later.

### VII. On Friendship

In 1597 during his stay in Nanchang, Ricci wrote a letter to Claudio Acquaviva reporting about his success in the wake of a booklet entitled *On Friendship (De Amicitia)*. A Chinese prince asked him to write about how friendship was understood and cultivated in the West. A brief treatise largely reflecting Cicero's *Laelius*, it is a compilation from "our philosophers, saints, and all old and modern authors" (*de nostri philosophi, santi, et tutti autori vecchi e moderni*).<sup>89)</sup>

Besides Cicero's *De Amicitia*, Joseph Dehergne cited, as possible sources for Ricci's booklet, Aelred of Rievaulx's *De Spirituali Amicitia*. Plato, possibly Augustine and the little but well-known Chinese treatise *Ming Sin Pao Kien (The Precious Mirror of the Soul)* were also quoted. Otherwise, despite the identity of

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88) *JMR*, pp. 102, 104.

89) Quoted in Dehergne, J., 'Les Sources du Kiao Yeou Lien', *Reserches de Sciences Religieuse*, t. 72, 1984, pp. 52, 58. Herein after, *Les Sources*.

its title, says d'Elia, and contrary to what has been sometimes affirmed, Ricci's short axioms on friendship call to mind Cicero's book. We will dwell on some of the passages which served to reinforced the supplemental approach Ricci employed to capture the imagination of his Chinese hosts.

Originally written in both Italian and Chinese, *On Friendship* was accepted as a standard literary work, "short as it was."<sup>90</sup> It had so startled the literati that Ricci became nearly accepted as one of them, although whenever he debated with the literati he would be conveniently placed in "the first place at table... because he was a stranger."<sup>91</sup>

The concept of friendship in China is expressed in a rich range of imagery and comparisons. The *Book of Odes* offers the following verse:

There was presented to me a papaya,	投我以木
And I returned for it a beautiful <i>keu-gem</i> ;	瓜報之瓊
Not as a return for it;	踞匪報也
But that our friendship might be lasting.	永以爲好也 <sup>92</sup>

Likewise, Ricci went on to write ninety seven maxims, and the 'treatise' begins with the classical Yogyo notion of reciprocity:<sup>93</sup>

My friend is no one but myself; it is an other myself; hence one should consider a friend as oneself. (1)

My friend and I, we are two, but in these two one is the heart. To lean one on the other and to help one another: this is what nurtures friendship. (2)<sup>94</sup>

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90) *JMR*, p. 282. The annotated French translation we are using is on pages 59-70 of the *Les Sources*.

91) *JMR*, p. 341.

92) Legge, J., *The Chinese Classics, The She King*, vol. IV, bk.V, ode X, Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., reprint, 1991-4., p. 107.

93) *The Analects*, ch. 15:23-24. In Yi Byeok's *Essence of Sage Teaching (EST)*, as we shall see, this notion is also used in the beginning of his work. For Cicero's objection on the reciprocity in friendship, see Powell, *op. cit.*, XVI:56-59, p. 54.

94) *Les Sources*, p. 60. The maxims will appear with their respective chapters in brackets.

The idea that a friend is another self can be found in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics* (9.1166a.) Cicero himself would refer to it as *me alterum* by creating the neologism *redamare* -- an allusion to Plato's *antifilein*, or to love in return (*Lysis* 212 c.) Yi Byeok, as we will read in the *EST*, also made use of the old Chinese notion of reciprocity (爾我如自) by almost exactly paraphrasing Aristotle.<sup>95)</sup> Hence, by awakening a sense of affection -- *sensu amandi*<sup>96)</sup> -- between two people, friendship is depicted as reciprocating love and fidelity whose foundation is *convenientia*<sup>97)</sup>, or harmony -- a community of views which embraces both human and divine matters.

Ricci understood that the ancient Chinese considered Heaven and Earth as something animated, and that its common soul were worshipped as a supreme deity. Therefore, he could not have presented, through the concept of friendship, a finer "community of views" of which his Chinese hosts had long imparted:

...friendship is in fact nothing other than a community of views on all matters human and divine, together with goodwill and affection [*caritate*].<sup>98)</sup>

And because of affection, friendship cannot be simply exchanged as an item one buys or sells. A papaya (木瓜) for a *keu-gem* (瓊). To quote Yi Byeok, one who does so falls in a whirl of emptiness. It is affection which makes the needy rich, the rich strong; which actualises both past and future, and even makes "the dead still live."<sup>99)</sup> One is accompanied by a sense of affection within that "community of

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See the passage in *Laelius: Rerum enim amicum qui intuetur, tamquam exemplar aliquod intuetur sui*. V:17. pp. 35, 36.

95) For the Chinese version of the *EST*, see Chapter Four.

96) Powell, *op. cit.*, VIII:27.

97) *Ibid.*, XXVII:100. Ricci confirms the above by stating that it is harmony which is the foundation of friendship; see *Les Sources*, (9), p. 61.

98) *Ibid.*, VI., p. 37.

99) *Ibid.*, VII:23.

views." Cicero argues that affection "contains its own fruits within itself"<sup>100</sup>, a Taoist-like notion, if it is equated with the "core of vitality"<sup>101</sup>, bringing order to the world and "allowing man to be free of care... genuine in his kindness, [so] he can practice love."<sup>102</sup>)

In this study, affection can also be equated with *jeonghan*, for as Cicero observed, it makes the dead still live. Life as self-expenditure, as in the story of the death of two crown-princes, the brothers Show and Keih-tsze. The former urged his brother to escape to another state, lest he be murdered in a court intrigue. Since he refused, Show made Keih-tsze drunk, impersonated him and took a boat on which his brother was supposed to be killed. When the surviving prince found out what had happened to Show, he took another boat and he too was put to death.<sup>103</sup>)

As a variation on the same theme, one can identify Confucius saying, "Sacrifice to the dead as if they were present, sacrifice to spirits as if they were present"<sup>104</sup>) with the Biblical passage,

When people could not honor monarchs in their presence, since they lived at a distance, they imagined their appearance far away, and made a visible image of the king whom they honored, so that by their zeal they might flatter the absent one as though present.<sup>105</sup>)

Navarette observed that "as though present" corresponded exactly to the Chinese *ju zai* (sic), a preposition interpreted in one sense by some missionaries, and by others

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100) Ibid., VIII:3.

101) See note 27.

102) Baynes, W., tr., *The I Ching*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, p. 295.

103) Legge, J. *op. cit.*, I, bk. III, ode XIX, p. 71.

104) *The Analects* 3:12.

105) Wis 14:17. See Churchill, A., *A Collection of Voyages and Travels, some now first printed from original manuscripts, others now first published in English.. To which is prefixed and introductory discourse... entitled, the whole history of navigation from its origins to this time*, 3rd. ed., London: printed by assignment from Messrs. Churchill, fro Henry Lintot; and John Osborn, 1744-1747, vol. I, p. IV. p. 161.

in another, thus causing much discord in that mission.<sup>106)</sup> In *On Friendship*, Ricci referred to the absence of dead friends by implying they are nonetheless present *as if*. By doing so, and in conformity with the traditional interpretation, one can affirm the spiritual presence of the dead *as if* they were visibly present:

Regarding my deceased friends I do not harbour sadness, because when they were alive I entertained them as if I could lose them; now that they are dead I think of them as if they were present. (14)

In the above passage, one is speaking com-passionately, or in *jeonghan*. Cicero had it this way in the *Laelius*:

...he who looks at a true friend, sees as it were a reflection of himself. Thus those who are absent are made present, the needy are made rich, and weak strong, and, a harder saying still, the dead still live. So lively is the memory that follows after them among their friends, so great the respect, so keen the longing, and through this the dead even seem to be happy in death, while those who mourn gain honour while yet alive.<sup>107)</sup>

It was in this sense that Ricci understood and tried to explain to Europe China's reverence to the Prince of Philosophers, Confucius, who in death was not worshipped as a deity but remembered ritually, as if a friend and as if he had never died but left an indelible mark in the memory of those who, by remembering him, would in fact "gain honor while yet alive."

Being the first literary contribution supporting the policy of coming to an understanding with his Chinese hosts, we should not fail to note that very early in the mission as he wrote *On Friendship*, Ricci identified and paired the God of the Bible with *Sangju* (上主)(14), the Lord of Heaven, and *Sangje* (上帝)(53), whom the

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106) This being a Dominican friar and the author of the first volume of Churchill's *A Collection of Voyages and Travels*. Navarette was sent to the Philippines in 1646, but "finding no great encouragement [there], ...ventured to China, where he spent several years."

107) *Laelius*, VII:23.

literati would otherwise simply call *Cheon*, 'Heaven.' Friendship, connoted by the pictographs *gyo-u* (交友), is grounded on a common virtue (17). The true friend uses reason and sincerity, where friendship is said to be possible only by good, superior men (59) themselves capable of self-expending affection "from which friendship derives its name."<sup>108)</sup>

### X. Conclusion

In this chapter we have attempted to give a thematic introduction to the historical and religious background in Northeast Asia in general, and in Joseon in particular, which are relevant to the concerns of this thesis, as it is primarily concerned with intellectual history, specially the supplemental discourse between traditions. Ricci it was who criticised the major traditions, e.g., Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism. He supplemented his Catholic teaching by 1) focusing on original Confucianism, in which the monotheistic idea of the God of the Bible was compatible with Catholicism; 2) comparing virtue (德) with Western maxims, drawn specially from Cicero. Hence Ricci paved the way to make the Teaching of the Lord of Heaven a viable current of thought.

In Japan the attempted policy of conformity to the *catangues* intended to form an indigenous priesthood which would ultimately bring together *daimyos* and their subjects to Christian truth. But this policy of accommodation was more subtly -- and effectively -- planted into Ricci's vineyard. In Japan a literati tradition, though known and espoused by some prominent scholars, was never an academy in Ricci's recording of the term. In Ming China, however, Ricci met with a scholarly world that thought of itself with universal grandeur. It was conceivable, Ricci argued, that their four thousand year old civilisation had at one point cultivated ethically and revered religiously the unique God of the Bible.

The *gravitas* the Chinese gave to immemorial past could not have been more welcome, and so Ricci's emphasis on an original Confucianism was neatly within tradition. The policy of *catangues* articulated by Valignano if not entirely successful in the end, cannot be blamed for the eventual failure as one considers

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108) *Laelius*, VIII:26.



Japan's peculiar historical circumstances. Rather, insofar as it did not preclude a blending with the existing ethical, religious and social practices, it was an unusual insight anticipating in more than four hundred years what modern scholarship would term indigenisation. The *Advertimentos* underscored Ricci's future mission from the start, as the Jesuit father came to interact with a very different political and religious dominion. It certainly informed Ricci's own view on how Catholic teaching could accommodate itself to Ming China. Our hypothesis seems reinforced as one reads that Ricci, then newly arrived in Macao (7 August 1582) "copied the document as it was (e.g., with the date it had); [it was] then signed by Val[ignano] who was then in Macao, and sent to Roma"<sup>109</sup>)

The religious themes, Ricci strongly contested the disparate notions of voidness and non-being in both Taoism and Buddhism, for they were in disagreement with the doctrine of the Lord of Heaven. The literati, however, who had walked the path of sincerity through the "light of reason" -- a theme we will discuss in the next chapters -- were closer to Catholic truth.<sup>110</sup>) Ricci rationalised what it was elsewhere termed the allusive nature of Chinese thought patterns and religious sentiment. In so doing there was little room for him to appreciate or indeed accommodate to his hosts' allusive reasoning. In this light he did not quite succeed in doing what Valignano had called for in Japan: *familiaridade* -- to be familiar with. It is an open question, religiously speaking, whether one can truly take the conversions at the highest levels of the literati class other than in friendship, or a strict allegiance to the "traditional Chinese thought" which informed the literati duty to the country.<sup>111</sup>)

Although Ricci was a Jesuit, a fact we do not fail to keep in mind, he was almost totally exiled in his mission, as China harboured a serene indifference to foreigners.<sup>112</sup>) One can more or less discount the fervour with which he criticised

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109) *ICMG*, note 3. In Italian: *copiò il documento<sup>1</sup>) così com'era (cioè con la data che portava); fu poi firmato dal Val, il quale allora stava a Macao, e spedito a Roma.*)

110) *TMLH* p. 99.

111) Gernet, J., 'La Société Chinoise a la fin des Ming', *Recherches de Science Religieuse*, t. 72, 1984, p. 19.

112) Spence, J.D., *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, London: Faber and Faber, 1985, p.

Chinese religions, because he opted to justify original Confucianism. He never ceased to refer to Confucianism as a sect, but there was a marked semantic difference between what he meant by the "sect of the literati" (Confucianism) and the "sect of idols" (Buddhism). If in the former he could find vestiges of the idea of God, in the latter he found a concerted confusion of doctrines. One may contend that St Augustine's doctrine concerning the priority of Catholic teaching *qua* pagan religions obstructed Ricci's appreciation of Buddhism and Taoism. Furthermore, he tried to employ, amidst all real and imagined differences, Aristotelian reason as his guiding principle, on the grounds that reason was the marker of the immortality of the human soul.

In sum, we should look at Ricci as a Jesuit, but a stranger -- as he referred to himself. A stranger who honestly sought to relate in friendship, both as a messenger of scientific ideas and practices and, whenever possible, a consoler of souls. Ricci planted a vineyard in East Asia: from the top boughs he could have seen the footsteps that led back to Xavier, to Aristotle, to God and thus supplementarily, to Sangje.

## Chapter Two

### **The TMLH:**

#### **Supplementing the Idea of God**

##### I. Introduction

Matteo Ricci's mission to China -- more rigorously understood in its philosophical dimension vis-à-vis the religious dialogue with and criticism of the Three Teachings, e.g., Taoism, Buddhism and Confucianism -- has been somewhat ignored in Korea.<sup>1)</sup> It is within the framework of this far-reaching concern that this chapter will examine one of its component aspects: namely, Ricci's supplemental understanding of *Sangje* (上帝), the idea of the Lord on High. The hypothesis of this chapter is that Ricci sought to disentangle the purity of monotheism of the most ancient recorded times of China and to associate it with Catholicism. But the idea of God could only make sense to the Confucian scholar, the *seonbi*, so long as it enlightened the paradigmatic concept of self-cultivation, *susin*. And this is what we will try to elucidate.

Ricci's *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* -- TMLH -- is primarily concerned with Catholic beliefs which could be proved by natural or apodictic reason. It is a treatise designed to advocate the existence of God as the creator of Heaven and Earth, Paradise and Hell and the immortality of the soul. At the same time, Ricci aimed to disprove the ideas of Buddhism and Taoism, and Chu Hsi's official orthodoxy, Neo-Confucianism. His rational method, informed by the Jesuit "way of proceeding" or the art of persuasion, was to impose reason over myth, superstition and irrationality. He maintained that the three traditions were established by three different men who seemed mutually dissatisfied with each other's interpretations.<sup>2)</sup> It is important to reiterate that Ricci was intellectually committed to

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1) In Korea, for example, the only doctoral dissertation on Matteo Ricci and his the *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* was written back in 1973. See, Kim Dong Chan, *Matteo Ricci's Mission to China and his Buddhism Writings* -- as regarding the *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*, Ph.D. dissertation, Seoul: Catholic University, 1973.

2) *TMLH*, pp. 403-4.

the existence of an original pre-Han theism. This served him as a guiding principle, insofar as it related to the imparting of the idea of God. Within this perspective, Ricci focused on the culturally relevant notions of virtue and self-cultivation, and thus sought to come to an understanding with "original Confucianism" in which a monotheistic form of worship existed.

Philosophically, Ricci started by looking at the way the Great Ultimate came to be interpreted as an accident and, theologically, how it could be said to accord with the ancient figure of *Shang-ti* -- or *Sangje* in Korean --, the Lord on High. On both fronts, Ricci aimed to found his rational claim regarding the idea of God on the singular nature of what he considered was original Confucianism, as he attempted to liken Sangje with the God of the Bible.<sup>3)</sup> Ricci was trying to seek agreement with original Confucianism, not by trying to identify the two paradigmatic deities pure and simple, but to correlate them so as to underscore the historical pertinence of Catholic teaching and his own interpretation of the Chinese Classics. This correlation would be similar, for instance, to the one between King Wen (文王) and Sangje, Jesus and the God of the Bible. Moreover, Ricci refuted the diffuse Buddhist semantics bearing on his Christian doctrine, by contending that Buddhism and Sakyamuni had in fact borrowed much from the Judeo and Christian traditions. Confucianism, epistemologically supplemented by the Teaching of the Lord of Heaven, could then in Ricci's eyes meet Christian teaching and attain unequivocal religious salvation.

Structurally, we will take a closer look at the China Mission, emphatically supported by Alessandro Valignano, the Visitor to the Indies whose policy of accommodation in the East shaped Ricci's own approach in China; a brief record of Ricci's life and work will follow. By focusing on the backgrounds and characteristics of the *TMLH*, I will look at the backgrounds of Ricci's major work, and some of the issues that marked this pre-evangelical discourse, i.e., the search

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3) For a discussion of the comparison between Neo-Confucianism with which Ricci engaged and foundational Confucianism, see P. Rule, *Kung-tzu or Confucius: The Jesuit Interpretation of Confucianism*, Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1986. Also see, J.D. Young article, 'Original Confucianism versus Neo-Confucianism: Matteo Ricci's Chinese Writings', in *Chine Ancienne* (pre-Modern China), ed Chan T-W, et al., Paris: L'Asiatèque, 1977.

for original Confucianism and the important theme of *susin*, or self-cultivation. Subsequently, I will discuss the major philosophical concepts pertinent to the analysis of the idea of God understood as a) *Sangje*, b) the Great Ultimate (太極) and c) the Lord of Heaven. These are topics directly related to Ricci's insistence on a supplemental, rational form of monotheism.

## II. Ricci, Man and Work

Matteo Ricci (1552-1610) was born into a prominent family in Macerata, Italy. He was educated by the Jesuits and at the age of sixteen headed for Rome to study law. He quickly became interested in the new science that was sweeping across Europe, and which would prove an invaluable instrument later in his missionary life. After becoming a Jesuit novice, he studied mathematics under Christopher Clavius (1537-1612), and developed a pertinent knowledge of geography and astronomy. Thereafter he volunteered for the Propagation of the Faith in the East Indies, and left for Lisbon in 1577. The following year he took the *São Luis* bound for Goa, where he concluded his studies and devoted himself to missionary activities. There it was, in the *Indie Orientale*, that the search for an understanding with a civilisation almost entirely unrelated to his own would bring the Christian Mission to an extraordinary new beginning.

In 1582 the Jesuit visitor to the East, Alessandro Valignano, invited Ricci to work for the spread of the Gospel in China. In August of that year he arrived in the Portuguese enclave of Macao. By then Michele Ruggeri was already working in China, and with him Ricci started his long and remarkable leap into China proper. Ruggeri had arrived in Macao in 1579, and is said to have mastered roughly twelve thousand characters, sufficient for the compilation of a first Chinese version of Christian doctrine. Other sources, however, maintain that he failed to attain a comprehensive mastery of the language, and that it was this that prompted Valignano's invitation to Ricci.<sup>4)</sup> Be this as it may, Ruggeri's catechism *Vera et*

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4) Ruggeri's language skills should not have been so rudimentary, for he was even able to write poems in Chinese. See, Albert Chan's *Michele Ruggeri, S.J. (1543-1607) and his Chinese Poems*, Monumenta Serica Institute, 1993, pp. 129-176.

*brevis divinarum rerum expositio*, published in 1584, served as the starting point for Ricci's major work, the *TMLH*. In Kwandong, Ricci and Ruggeri were received by Wang Pan, the local prefect, who graciously let them stay at Zhaoqing, where they built a Western-style house with a chapel. As custom required, Wang Pan presented the establishment of the religious mission with two plaques: one read Lotus Temple and the other, Western Pure Land Temple, and in this manner Wang Pan acknowledged their status as Buddhist bonzes in the eyes of the Chinese.

Ricci tried to pave the way for the spread of Catholic doctrine through literary and scholarly means. He clearly endeavoured to stick to Francis Xavier's envisioned enterprise.<sup>5)</sup> Xavier was very sensible in the way the missionaries dealt with the Japanese catangues -- an approach which, as we have discussed, Valignano refined and largely recommended both in Japan and China. Ricci eventually attained a deeper knowledge of China and the Chinese way of life than Ruggeri, and by 1586 was fluent in standard Chinese. In the same year they moved to Shaozhou and nine years later established themselves in Nanchang.

As the entire kingdom was administered by the Order of the Learned -- the literati --, Ricci tried to associate himself not as a heterodox bonze as he and the other Jesuits were first viewed, but as a Confucianism scholar. This change of attitude and the way Ricci addressed his scholarly interlocutors probably took place about the year 1591. By the end of 1592 Ricci decided to stop referring himself as a bonze. Consequently, at least in clothing and in their partial knowledge of the Classics, the first Jesuits presented themselves as Confucianism scholars. But with their talk of Heaven and Hell, the insistence on recompense for the good and punishment for the evil, the Lord of Heaven Teaching (天主教), was never very much dissociated from Buddhism.

Residence in Beijing was Ricci's target from early in his mission. For the last fourteen years of his life he acted as the Superior of the China mission, following its independence from Macao in 1596. He had repeatedly attempted -- and

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5) In one letter written from Goa to the Portuguese King João III on 8 April 1552, Xavier insisted *ex necessitate rei* on the recruiting of well-educated, experienced priests to be sent to the newly found mission in the Indies. See Felix Zubillaga, ed., *Cartas y Escritos de San Francisco Javier*, Madrid: 1953, pp. 463-464.



failed -- to approach the Emperor, a personage closely related to the worship of Heaven. Ricci inferred that because the Chinese "worship Heaven as the Supreme Being, the Son of Heaven and the Son of God are one and the same."<sup>6)</sup> Although he and the Ming emperor were never to meet face to face, the latter was keenly interested in some of the tributes sent by the Italian Jesuit.<sup>7)</sup> The emperor was fascinated with Western musical instruments, and more especially with the clocks Ricci had brought as presents. This confirmed Ricci in his view that the emperor could, by reason, be brought to the natural light of Christian doctrine. One could even dream of propagating, the essence of Catholic teaching -- which in Ricci's mind was already impregnated in China's ancient theism -- throughout the whole world under Heaven and Earth. One shall be reminded that the "whole world" alludes first and foremost to the very existence of China as the centre and vessel, as it were, of Heaven and Earth.

Ricci was also able to witness to some of the mission's most remarkable accomplishments in the last decades of his life, as it was allowed into Beijing and settled within the Great Pearl Gate, the western central section of the city. After moving several times and renting many houses, they managed to purchase a place of their own for permanent residence in 1605.<sup>8)</sup> It was a decade in which two important conversions took place<sup>9)</sup>, the translation of Euclid's *Elements* was

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6) *JMR*, p. 43.

7) As Franke observed, China saw itself as the receptacle of the riches and the achievements of world civilisation, and it tried to fit its relations with European countries into the categories of the tribute system. See Franke, W., *China and the West*, Oxford: Basil and Blackwell, 1967, p. 26.

8) In the Great Pearl Gate, where the mission was rooted, the definite residence opened on 27 August 1605 and a church was later established. The Catholic mission would keep its possessions up to the early 1950s.

9) Xu Guangqi (1562-1633) and Li Zhizao (1565-1629), two of the three pillars of the early church. The other one being Yang Tingyun. As long as they lived, Catholic teaching could "rely on the support of these powerful patrons," but when they died the mission became increasingly focused on Beijing and the scientific work of Frs. A. Schall von Bell and F. Verbiest. See, Mungello, D.E., *The Forgotten Christians of Hangzhou*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994, p. 17. For the positive reaction to Ricci's literary work in China, see also, Choe S. J., *Dongseo Munhwa Gyoryusa Yeongu* (Research on East-West Cultural Interchange), Seoul: Somunhwa-sa, 2nd. ed., 1990. pp. 94-100.



completed, the *TMLH* was revised and published. Still not having completed the full cycle of sixty years Ricci literally wore himself away and fell in eternal slumber in 1610. He was buried outside the western gate of Beijing, and his grave was undisturbed until the Boxers destroyed it in 1900. A second desecration took place in 1966, but it was restored and remains open to the public since 1980.

A full list of Ricci's writings would start with his Latin translation of the *Four Books* (四書), now lost, at Shaozhou in 1589. The first version of the *TMLH* and *On Friendship* followed when Ricci was in Nanchang (1595-1598).<sup>10)</sup> A revised edition of the world map appeared in 1600, which was later published with the help Li Zhizao in Beijing. The *TMLH* and *On Friendship* were also published. During the stay in Nanchang, between 1595 and 1598, Ricci composed his first book concerning "our sacred philosophers and doctors" in Chinese and a hand-written copy was presented to the local prince.<sup>11)</sup> *On Friendship*, in his own words, represented

[an] exercise in Chinese characters...concerning friendship...and since our authors are so many and so distinguished, the literati of this country became all the more astonished ("*più che attoniti*").<sup>12)</sup>

In a letter to Father Girolamo Costa written on 15 August 1599 Ricci emphasised the credit he and Europe gained with this work.<sup>13)</sup> The Italian father seems to have regarded it as evidence of the possibility of coming to an understanding with Chinese traditions: the spirit of friendship -- rather than authority -- would lead him to a personal journey of dialogue rather than religious confrontation.

In 1604 Ricci published *Twenty-five Sayings from Epictetus*, a short treatise,

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10) Ricci, as it should be recalled, construed his explanation for the Lord of Heaven in the *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* largely on the *Saso* (四書), the Four Books of ancient China.

11) As we have seen in the preceding chapter, Ricci is said to have written this short essay on friendship after the prince prodded him to elaborate on how friendship is practised in the Western countries.

12) *OS*, vol. II, p.226.

13) *Ibid.*, p. 248.

followed by *Ten Paradoxes of a Strange Person*, a work on ethics in 1608. One year earlier, along with the first six chapters of Euclid's *Elements*, he had produced texts on astronomy, trigonometry, geometry, arithmetic, and his well-known polemics with Buddhism, which he discussed more plainly in the *Critical Letters on Buddhism and Catholicism*.<sup>14)</sup> Ricci's role and significance in the Jesuit mission in the East justly allowed him to be mentioned in the rolls of Ming dynasty.

### III. The True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven (TMLH)

#### *a. The Confucian All-Encompassing Ethical Paradigm*

Originally written in Chinese, the *TMLH* not only reached the literati of China's Ming and Ching dynasties but also Japan, Mongolia, Joseon and other Asian regions. It aroused a rather passionate debate within Northeast Asia's Chinese cultural sphere. Indeed, there is no record of a comparable experience in the history of these nations. As one looks back at the late Ming period, one cannot but

...find it almost incredible that a foreigner however well educated and intelligent he might be [and] without any previous knowledge of the Chinese language and civilization was able within less than twenty years to take residence in the capital, be accepted by a very different, highly sophisticated, sinocentric, anti-foreign and exclusive society, become a prominent member of this society, make friends with a number of the most eminent scholar-officials of the time, and even convert some of them to his Christian faith, receive a regular allowance from the emperor during his lifetime and a burial place after his death.<sup>15)</sup>

Ricci became "a prominent member" of his society by building on the fundamental tenets of self-cultivation (修身) and humanness (仁), which are to instill and orient human relationships. Confucius saw himself as a transmitter of the Way the venerated sages of yore practiced virtue. Hence, the "profound person" -- or

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14) For a more detailed list of Ricci's writings, see Bibliography.

15) Goodrich C. ed., *Dictionary of Ming Biography*, 2 vols, New York: Columbia University Press, 1976, p. 1143.

*gunja* 君子-- strives to attain understanding through self-cultivation (修身, *susin*) so as to arrive at a co-partnership with Heaven and Earth: the supreme Confucian ideal. Invariably the *gunja* does that by reviewing the past so as to establish the new -- *ongo jisin* (溫故知新). This became a handy principle in Ricci's search for a supplemental interpretation of original Confucianism.

*Susin*, or self-cultivation, can be understood both as a flight towards one's "inner light", which would enlighten and guide the soul, and an outer process of self-education proper. The former is the very spirit of life, *jen* (仁), which leads one to the intimate, personal experience of Heaven within. Mencius described this journey into 'heavenly selfhood' as the path of sincerity: "There is a way to be sincere with himself. If one does not understand what is good, he will not be sincere with himself. Therefore sincerity is the way of Heaven, and to think how to be sincere is the way of man."<sup>16</sup>) The latter, enables the individual to transcend personal limitations as he passes through the interdependent circles of moral practice, i.e., family, society, state, world and cosmos.

### *b. Supplementing the Ethical Paradigm*

Asserting that it is reason that distinguishes human beings from all other creatures, Ricci explained that humanity, decorum, and wisdom are subsequent to the capacity to reason.<sup>17</sup>) At the beginning of the *TMLH* Ricci let his "Western scholar" speak:

Now you, Sir, desire to learn the principles of the Lord of Heaven.<sup>18</sup>) I shall therefore state them plainly for you, and my explanations will be based solely on reason [*sapientia*].<sup>19</sup>)

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16) SBCP, Mencius, 4A:12. See also *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 20.

17) *TMLH*, pp. 328, 351.

18) Who is "the father of all intellects." *Ibid.*, p. 333.

19) *Ibid.*, p.71. Since Ricci was about to prove the existence of the one true God, the Great Artisan, he endorsed Lactantius' disavowal of the cults of the gods, for to worship the true God, is nothing but *sapientia*. See Smith, W.C., *The Meaning and End of Religion*, London: LPCK, 1978, p. 210.

Nevertheless, he also indicated that through the goodness of God and the Chinese own innate genius, the gospel was finally establishing firmer roots in the Empire. The Company of Jesus, and especially the China mission led by such enlightened missionaries as Matteo Ricci, should dare and succeed where former religious enterprises failed or eventually dissipated within the Chinese universe.<sup>20)</sup>

Obscured in pagan darkness for some thousand of years, as Ricci once described the Chinese,<sup>21)</sup> they could not understand what "the eternal treasures were, nor the infinite virtue, or divine beauty and all grace which were hidden behind [the figure of the crucified Jesus], which to them was so strange and ugly".<sup>22)</sup> But the Chinese, Ricci argued, were a people to be pitied rather than censured. In a similar vein, the Chinese magistrates were, in Ricci's words, lost souls and guides of a people who placed little or no trust in any foreign country, their own citizens and relatives.<sup>23)</sup> The Chinese were suspicious of strangers, whether they came from

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20) The fate of the Nestorians was one of Ricci's unanswered questions, whose presence was asserted by the so-called Nestorian stone discovered in 1625, fifteen years after Ricci's death. Historically, in 635 B.C.E the Nestorians established a mission to China and in 638 a church was built in Changan. See Moule, A.C., *Christians in China Before the Year 1550*, New York: Octagon Books, 1972, pp. 24-32. Nestorianism would attempt a new and last mission in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, only to leave vestiges of its presence. Also in the thirteenth century, the Franciscans made little impact in China with the creation of small Christians communities particularly amongst the ruling Mongolians. Ricci, in his turn, was surprised to find remnants of a Jewish community in Kaifeng, and was much baffled by the invitation he received to become the leader of this lost tribe. For an oriental perspective in English on the Nestorians, see P. Y. Saeki, *The Nestorian Monument in China: and Syro-Chinese Text of Nestorian inscription and translation*, London, New York: Macmillan, 1928. For an account on the Jews of Kaifeng, see W. C. White, *Chinese Jews: A Compilation on Matters relating to the Jews of Kai-feng*, New York: Paragon Book Reprint Corp., 1966. The Jesuit scholar Joseph Dehergne also wrote on the theme and published, *Juifs de Chine, à travers la correspondance inédite de Jésuites du dix-huitième siècle*, Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1980.

21) *TMLH*, p. 369.

22) "a man soaked in blood and put on a cross" (*um homem ensangüentado e pôsto em uma cruz*.) F. Guerreiro, *Relação Anual das Coisas que Fizeram os Padres da Companhia de Jesus nas Suas Missões*, tomo primeiro, Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade, 1930, p. 243.

23) Spence, J. D., *The Memory Palace of Matteo Ricci*, London: Faber & Faber, 1985, p. 54.

neighbouring countries or faraway.<sup>24)</sup> But there was much to be admired: the Chinese agriculture, the porcelain from Jiangxi, the arts and the Confucianism moral code, which should make, Ricci believed, the literati sympathetic to the Lord of Heaven Teaching:

[the Chinese] could certainly become Christians, since the essence of their doctrine contains nothing contrary to the essence of the Catholic faith, nor would the Catholic faith hinder them in any way, but would indeed aid in that attainment of the quiet and peace of the republic which their books claim as their goal."<sup>25)</sup>

It has been argued that Ricci managed to ascend to a scholarly status due to his prodigious memory, his scientific knowledge, the Western instruments he introduced into the Empire, but especially his way of coming to an understanding with the Chinese, which has been generally described as his unique accommodation method.<sup>26)</sup> But Ricci was a foreigner and no matter how much he may have striven to become a "Chinese for Christ", he was addressed as a foreigner by the written pictographs which the Chinese of late Ming dynasty "applied to beasts."<sup>27)</sup> Yet, his presence and work were acknowledged and tolerated, as if he were a *literatus*, in which capacity he gained their admiration.

The *TMLH* is an epistemological construct cast in a specific linguistic mould. On the other hand it must be emphasised that traditional Chinese thought, as Gernet pointed out, does not stem from certain grammatical or epistemic functions, for it is informed by functional classification and opposition amongst words and sentences. He added that Chinese thought,

is concerned not with yes or no, being or non-being, but with

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24) Ibid., pp. 211-212.

25) D'Elia, P. *Fonti Ricciane*, Roma: Libreria dello Stato, vol I., 1942-1949, p. 120.

26) Jonathan Spence praised Ricci's intelligence and astounding mnemonic powers. Indeed, the *TMLH* is a consistent proof of Ricci's ingenuity.

27) *JMR*, p. 88

contraries which combine with and complement one another; not with eternal realities but with potentialities and tendencies, phases of flowering or decline. In the place of the idea of law as an immutable rule, it favours that of a model or schema for development...Comparisons and combinations are preferred to logical articulations.<sup>28)</sup>

Morphologically, there is no necessary link to connect subject, verb and predicate. A text can be as impersonal as the action of nature, which is riveted by impartiality and impersonality: the Chinese *caelis* acts without motivation. It is in this sense that Chung-ying Cheng discussed Confucianist and Taoist positions as regarding certain metaphysical categories, such as *t'ai-chi*, (the Great Ultimate) *Yin-Yang*, and *li-ch'i* (Principle and Material Force). He described the Chinese peculiar perception of reality as "ontology without language", Cheng affirms that

Chinese philosophers themselves generally do not believe that there is a metaphilosophical or metalinguistic criterion to decipher an ontology, whether that metaphilosophical or metalinguistic criterion be grammar, grammatical form, logic, or logical form. On the contrary, they generally believe that outside philosophy and the language of philosophy there is the direct experience and direct perception of reality by a person. This direct experience and direct perception of reality is the basis and ground for all philosophical speculation and the construction of the language of philosophy.<sup>29)</sup>

These very metaphilosophical and metalinguistic peculiarities have played a covert role in human reasoning and favoured certain orientations of thought. But Ricci, when discussing motivation, relied on reason to explain that Heaven cannot be said lacking it. The following passage is a good example:

there cannot be two truths which are both correct. If the religion of the Sovereign on High is true, then all other religions are wrong. If one of the other religions is true, then the religion of the Sovereign on High is

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28) Gernet, J., *La Société Chinoise à la fin des Ming*, Recherches de Science Religieuse, t. 72, 1984, p. 242.

29) Cheng, C. Y., 'Logic and Language in Chinese Philosophy', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 14, 1987, p. 291.

wrong.<sup>30)</sup>

Thus, the Italian father argued about natural reason by referring, for instance, to Gongsun Long's (c. 320-250 B.C.E) linguistic sophism, -- "a white horse is not a horse."<sup>31)</sup> Ricci made use of this metaphor to reinforce the categories of substance (自立者) -- i.e., that which is established of itself --, and accident (依賴者) -- i.e., that which depends upon something else.<sup>32)</sup> Nevertheless, he was unwilling to accept that the Scholastic-Aristotelian reasoning inspired by the 'Great West' was impertinent to the Chinese culture. For many educated Chinese minds, however, this way of introducing a new set of categories smacked of heterodoxy if not sheer cultural barbarism.

Yet Ricci was aware that unlike other parts of the world wherein Christian doctrine presented itself both as religion and a powerful civilising force, Chinese culture and some of its adjacent areas of influence were at least as powerful and intellectually robust as the Greco-Roman tradition. Therefore, when it came to writing about the elements of the doctrine for the literati, as Valignano had ordered, Ricci had to redouble his efforts to produce a text meaningful enough to justify, on the one hand, its borrowed scholarship and to support Catholic parallelism, which he sought to construct; and on the other, orthodox enough not to infringe Catholic religious doctrine.

As a Catholic missionary, determined to evangelise China by bringing the very Son of Heaven to the rational light of Catholic doctrine, Ricci tried to experiment with circumlocutions, subterfuges and even uncanny paraphrases in order

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30) *TMLH*, p. 393.

31) This argument on the existence of the white horse is to be found in the *Confucius-sun Lung Tzu*. For the argument itself, see *SBCP* pp. 235-237. Gongsun Long, with his thesis of the white horse, was in fact defending the Confucianism school of names by proposing a language reform that could transparently and invariably guide behaviour. His position, as Hansan argues, was "a defense of Confucian theory of language...the formal corollary of the rectification of names." However, very few scholars concurred with his attacks on the realist conception. See, Hansan, C., *A Daoist Theory of Chinese Thought*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, pp. 258, 261.

32) *TMLH*, p. 109.



to come to an understanding with his hosts. This may give the impression that he was possibly contrived, even duplicitous in his efforts to accommodate in the intellectual universe of the literati. But throughout his missionary work as a Jesuit, Ricci fundamentally preserved the spirit of the *Exercises*: the intellectual brilliance attained by Ricci was subordinate to his religious vocation, and that we must not overlook.

There might have been a hidden motive, and this was illustrated by Ricci's brief and mystical conversation with God which seemingly re-oriented the future course of the Jesuit work in the country. Whether in a state of desolation for the failure to settle in Nanjing, or in spiritual communication, that hidden motive appeared to have consoled and re-invigorated him:

During his [Ricci's] sleep he had a dream, in which he met a strange wayfaring man, who said to him, "Is this the way you wander about this vast kingdom, imagining that you can uproot an age-old religion and replace it with a new one?"...[Ricci] had always kept his ultimate design as an utter secret. So he answered, "You must be either the Devil or God himself, to know what I have never revealed to anyone..." "By no means the Devil, say rather God"...and falling at the feet of the mysterious person, he implored, all in tears: "Since you know my design, O Lord, why do you not lend me a helping hand..."... A wave of consolation passed over him when he heard the assuring words, "I shall be propitious to you in both of the royal cities."... He awoke with tears in his eyes and related his dream for the consolation of his companion, who was as downhearted as himself.<sup>33)</sup>

Trusting in this vision, Ricci insisted on the policy of Jesuit cultivation of the vineyard within the old-established Confucianism tradition. Ricci knew that he could operate and supplement the religious amalgam in the country, as he himself acknowledged that the literati believed they were "practising a high form of religion if they [were] tolerant of falsehood and [did] not openly spurn or disapprove of an untruth."<sup>34)</sup> When Ricci wrote this, he was obviously making reference to the

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33) *JMR*, pp. 273-274.

34) *Ibid.*, pp. 97-98.

"triple cult of the Chinese."<sup>35)</sup> Accordingly, the generally quiescent reaction to the truth Ricci sought to found on natural reason, so as to supplement Confucian teaching, was the most educated response vis-à-vis the Chinese way of relating to and dealing with religion, be it foreign or not. It was the response which allowed him to become a literatus and, at the same time, keep his Jesuit vows.

### c. Composition of the Text

The dates of composition and publication of the *TMLH* have been disputed since the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>36)</sup> The first draft of the *TMLH* appeared in 1596, the year Ricci became the de facto ecclesiastical authority in China. Ruggeri's earlier work, the *Vera et brevis divinarum rerum expositio*, written in Chinese in the form of questions and answers, served as the foundation for Ricci's later work and was subsequently abandoned. Ruggeri's catechism was actually compiled by himself, Ricci and others in the early phases of the mission. It consisted of sixteen chapters, the contents of which was divided in five sections.

Other than baptism, which Xavier duly prescribed, this work did not mention any Catholic sacraments, but it gave a very persuasive account of the doctrine when it presented the two dispensational creeds: the incarnation and redemption. The *TMLH*, however, undertook a more systematically minded approach,

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35) Ibid., p. 94.

36) *TMLH*, p. 10. The *TMLH* appeared in several versions before its final revision and printing in 1603. There are obvious discrepancies between the version published in 1905 in Shanghai and the one printed in late Ming by Yang Yidang. Those discrepancies -- or rather word replacements -- referred to a suitable name for God. The changes reflected deeper theological implications owing to the Rites Controversy of 1631-1742, which became a problem of political relevance. However, the central issues involved were a) the suitability of *Cheonju* or *Sangje* for God; and b) the catholicity of ancestral worship as it was practised by the Chinese -- i.e., was it to be understood as a religious rite or a memorial service? For more details on the Rites Controversy, see Dunne, G. H., *Generation of Giants. The Story of the Jesuits in China in the last decades of the Ming Dynasty*, London: 1962, pp. 295-300. Also, Zhang Xingyao's, 'A Discussion of Sacrificial Rites' (*Sidian shuo*), a fourteen page essay held at the Jesuit archives in Rome, Japonica-Sinica I, 40/7a. Also see Choe G. B., 'Yugyo ui jecheon uirye' (Confucianism Rites to Heaven), *Iseong gwa sinang* (이성과 신앙), vol. 6, Suwon: Suwon Catholic University, 1993.

as Ricci's translation of the *Four Books* in Latin helped him gain a deeper insight into China's old texts and the scholarly sympathy.

In October of 1596 Ricci finished the first draft of the *TMLH*, and took care to remove some Buddhist expressions -- though an important number of terms would retain their Buddhist meaning -- and employ expressions and whole sentences from the *Four Books*. Ricci's literati friends returned the revised draft in 1601, after he had taken residence in Beijing. The preface was written by Feng Ying Jing, who seemed to emphasise a co-relational approach towards Catholic teaching, endorsed by few masters, and even nod to a mildly sympathetic view towards Buddhism, embraced by many of them:

Who is this Lord of Heaven [天主] ? [He is] the Lord on High [上帝]. When one points to reality [sī] one cannot be referring to voidness [空]. In this country... sages and worthies have feared, assisted, revered... the Lord on High...Who would call him voidness? China [漢] borrowed this notion from India [天竺]... In remote times, people addressed Heaven, but now they address the Buddha. In the past, they sacrificed to Heaven and Earth, the deities of the State, the mountains and streams, and the honorary spirits, but now they sacrifice to the Buddha [釋]. In the past the scholars knew and followed Heaven, but now there is only talk of Buddhism [念佛] and Buddhist works [作佛]...The Buddha is the lord [gun] of India, while we have our own masters [四郡]...What would become of me if I rejected what I have learnt and followed that lord? Cheng-Tzu said, 'the scholar [儒者] knows the original nature [本天] and Buddha, the original mind [本心].' Whether one can affirm this or not, one may say that the master's mind follows nature [師心之與法天], and both the scholar and the Buddha shall be pleased.<sup>37)</sup>

Originally written in eight chapters, the *TMLH* has the following contents, as outlined below:

*Chapter One: Proof of the existence of Cheonju.<sup>38)</sup>-- the Master of*

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37) Quoted in Choe S. J., *op. cit.*, p. 23. All translated portions will be credited to their sources; otherwise, it shall be understood that they were translated in English for the present dissertation. My translation.

38) *Cheonju* (天主), the Lord of Heaven, is also one of the minor deities in Buddhism. The first reference to the Christian master of Heaven dates from the time Ricci was assisted by Wang Pan

Heaven who first created Heaven, Earth and The Ten Thousand Things . He guides them and provides for their needs.

*Chapter Two:* Buddhism and Taoism are devious sects founded upon the void and nothingness, and the people of the present time are deluded by them and cannot recognise the true Master of Heaven.

*Chapter Three:* The soul of the individual, being eternal and unlike that of the animals, does not disappear after death. Ricci draws from the Greek classical tradition, by quoting the utterly different conduct of Democritus, who mocked human folly, and Heraclitus, who was compassionate.

*Chapter Four:* A refutation to the false doctrines concerning the spirit and the soul of man.

*Chapter Five:* Buddhism, its six ways of rebirth and the prohibition against the slaughter of animals, is again refuted. Fasting and the reasons for it are explained.

*Chapter Six:* Motivation should not be dismissed, for it is motivation which qualifies an action as good or bad. After death, Paradise is the natural reward for the good; Hell, for the impious.

*Chapter Seven:* Human nature, a 'dominion' of the rational soul, is essentially good.

*Chapter Eight:* : Introduction to Western moral concepts; the celibacy of priests is explained and the Advent anticipated.

#### *d. Supplementing Original Confucianism*

We have noted that Ricci initiated a method of cultural approach which largely focused on the upper strata of Chinese life. Ricci's method was fully in accord with the Jesuit policy of reaching to the top echelons of society in order to win the general public. He took side in the rich and intellectually charged atmosphere of the late Ming dynasty. Ricci rejected Chu Hsi's Neo-Confucianism, which did not recognised a personal, transcendental reality. Also, he was more inclined to privilege Confucius and Mencius, and base his argument for the co-relation of Confucianism with Catholic teaching on a possible supplemental approach to both traditions.

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and thoroughly taken as a bonze.

Ricci called for a re-evaluation of the most pristine conceptions of the Transcendent; but while the Italian father praised Confucius as a prince of philosophers, at the same time he wanted to show that the Chinese did indeed have a previous knowledge of God. God was a knowledgeable personal reality, rather than an impersonal principle constituting "the very reason" (所謂然) of all things, as taught by Chu Hsi.<sup>39)</sup>

Firstly, it was evident that the idea of the Lord of Heaven, Ricci argued, portrayed a sort of spiritual reality of which Sangje was the centre. The naturalistic view, according to which Heaven and the Lord of Heaven became impersonal references, was due to the influence of Buddhism and the non-theist philosophy of Chu Hsi. The Lord of Heaven, as introduced by Catholic teaching, was in accord with the original view of Sangje in the *Book of Odes*. There, a personal concept of Heaven seems to emphasise seeing and punishing. In fact, Ricci tried to quote as much as possible from the Classics in order to bring this point home and thus, gain the appreciation of the tradition-minded literati.

Secondly, the accommodation method tried to interpret positively the issues of ancestral worship and the belief in the mortality of the soul, by seriously taking the view that 'original Confucianism' recognised the existence of spirits and life after death, as the cult for the ancestors suggested. Hence Ricci readily saw in this a strong argument for the notion concerning the immortality of the soul.

Thirdly, emphasis was laid on Confucianism's theory of reward for good, punishment for evil as taught in the *I Ching*<sup>40)</sup>, which became an article of faith to the Chinese. Indeed, it was not something the individual only should worry about, but this theory extended to the tribe, nation and at times to the very person of the emperor. Ricci based his defence of the notion of heaven and hell after death on this original Chinese maxim -- as quoted in the footnote -- and possibly the famous passage in the *Book of Odes* in which King Wen was said to enjoy the heavenly

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39) *RTAH*, ch.1, secs. 25, 45. We will recall that discussing Heaven, Chu Hsi had suggested that its operations lacked any motives or providence, for the Great Heaven was principle (*li* or *i* -- 理) acting naturally, as we will see in some more detail in this chapter.

40) Wilhelm, R. trans., *I Ching*, London: Penguin Arkana, 1989, p. 393. The passage reads in Chinese, 積善之家 必有餘慶 積不善之家 必有餘殃.

company in full brilliance, as he served the Lord on High in awe and reverence:

King [Wen] is on high  
Oh! bright is he in heaven...  
King [Wen] ascends and descends,  
On the left and the right of God..  
Profound was king [Wen];  
Oh! continuous and bright was his feeling of reverence.<sup>41)</sup>

Moreover, Ricci encountered the support of eminent scholars who were in a position to give some measure of legal protection and intellectual compatibility to the Jesuits. As one of the pillars of Catholic teaching, Xu Guangqi consistently endorsed the Jesuit approach, i.e., its ethico-philosophical alliance with original Confucianism and rejection of Buddhism.<sup>42)</sup> He was keen to promote Ricci's scientific contributions in astronomy, the reform of the annual calendar, geometry and geography, as his *Complete Works on Agricultural Administration* (農政全書) emphasised. He wrote a great deal about Buddhism, but the main criticisms are to be found in the *Byeokmang* (闢妄) in which he also justified his sympathies towards Catholic teaching. Following the criticism of Buddhism, in 1616 he wrote the *Byeonghak jangso* (弁學章疏). It is here that the Jesuit approach to seek in 'original Confucianism' a religious analogous foundation was corroborated: what in the Confucianism books is called Sangje is the Lord of Heaven.<sup>43)</sup> Similar ideas were expressed by Li Zhizao in his preface to *Seongsu gi-eon* (聖水紀言) and Yang

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41) Legge, J., *The She King*, bk. I, ode 1, 4.

42) For a contemporary discussion on the work and influence of the first Chinese and Joseon scholars who accepted Catholic doctrine (*Cheonjuhak*) and the positive and negative reactions to Western thought (*Seohak*), see Choe S. J., *op. cit.*, pp. 94-110; and Yi Won Sun, *Joseon sidae saronjip -- An(Hanguk) gwa bak (Segye) ui Mannam ui yeogsa*, (*Collection of Historical Records of Joseon Dynasty The Historical Encounter of Inside (Korea) and Outside (World)*), Seoul: Nutinamu, 1993. Buddhism, it is argued, "spread in China like fire, [and] many Confucianists, who have not been able to look through the gate of the school of the Sage, have already been attracted to it and drowned in it together with the Buddhists." Cf. *RTAH*, XIII: 12, p. 286.

43) Quoted in Choe S.J., *op. cit.*, p. 96.



Tingyun's preface to Pantoja's *Chilgeuk* (七克). Xu Guangqi observed that when one looked with hindsight, it would become clear that the gist of the teachings of the ancients was based on the greater conception of serving Heaven and *susin*, self-cultivation, to which we will now turn.

#### IV. *Susin*, Self-Cultivation

The hypothesis of this chapter, as enunciated in the Introduction, is that Ricci sought to rediscover the pure monotheism of the most ancient recorded times of China and to associate it with Catholicism by being keenly aware of *susin*. This he himself acknowledged in the very first sentence of the *TMLH*: "The study of self-cultivation is a task which all men deem to be of the utmost importance."<sup>44)</sup> He quickly came to the conclusion that his focus should be on doctrinal purity, for to his mind, he was consistent in applying this to both Catholic teaching and Chinese religious concepts of *Cheon*, Heaven, and *Cheonju*, the Lord of Heaven. He understood that the Chinese revered the Good in times past, and his concern was to bring about the congenial wholeness of the most ancient times by intellectually persuading his hosts. This naturally led him to neglect Chu Hsi and Wang Yang Ming's contrasting interpretations of Confucianism, even if some philosophical affinity between the thought of the latter and his own was to be found.<sup>45)</sup> Indeed even Mencius who came just about one hundred years after Confucius was mildly dismissed.

Therefore, by relying on his interpretation of the high ethical prominence of Confucianism thought and cultural achievements on the one hand, and the parameters of Christian teaching on the other, Ricci was insistent on a shared sense of doctrinal purity. Original meaning was his interest and he was consistent in

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44) *TMLH*, p. 65.

45) It is important to remember, though in passing, that Wang Yang Ming's philosophy not only opposed Chu Hsi's school but really overshadowed it, as by the fifteenth century C.E. the "light of Neo-Confucianism" had become "dim if not extinguished." Practically, this meant that Ricci must have felt greatly free to approach and promptly dismiss the Ch'eng-Chu philosophy which had become "pure scholasticism." See *IPL*, pp. xi, xix, xx, sec. 181, p. 168.



applying this to the Catholic interpretation of the conception of God and Chinese theism. Ricci's methodological approach regarding this important issue of philosophical relationship with China's existing literary traditions became less relevant as he would privilege a theological-religious orientation, by trying to characterise the existence of *Cheonju* as the true rational Master of Heaven, who nevertheless created the human body and soul for the sake of *susin*:

God only has us born into this world in order to test us and have us practice virtue. So this life is for us but a journey, we are not here forever, nor does our final goal lie here below... Man is created for heaven, and his head and eyes are raised high so he can always see whither he is bound.<sup>46)</sup>

It is with its concern for "man's talents"<sup>47)</sup> that the *TMLH* brings to the fore its reference to *susin* by thematising a Catholic-supplemented theology of Confucianism. The Chinese scholar, once introduced to or persuaded by the natural light of reason, should recognise the Catholic Lord of Heaven and thus heuristically achieve harmony with Heaven and Earth through *susin*. Indeed, due to its emphasis on *susin*, the *TMLH* presents a message extricated of revelatory intercessions and magical nuances, which according to Ricci; characterised Buddhism and Taoism. Being founded on natural reason, it glossed over revelation and the mysteries of the doctrine, as was the case with Ruggeri's first catechism, upon which the *TMLH* was nonetheless grounded.

The truth regarding the Lord of Heaven, being itself constantly within the world, is not to be regarded as something external, dispossessed. It reflects and is apprehended as dimly-perceived immanence, because "man... transcends all other creatures since he is endowed with a spiritual soul [神靈] within, and the ability to observe the principles of things without."<sup>48)</sup> The scholar can learn more about it by aiming higher and thus attaining a nobler learning, so that one can accord with the holy will of the Lord of Heaven. In other words, he seeks to substantiate 'sagely

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46) *TMLH*, ch. 3. Quoted in Spence, J.D., *op. cit.*, pp. 158-159.

47) *TMLH*, p. 261.

48) *Ibid.*, p. 69.

learning' which "has been engraved on our minds by the Lord of Heaven". Ricci concluded that this is what is meant by the phrase, "return to one's origin", which is the point to be achieved as one aims at the highest good: "the perfection of oneself" founded on *susin*, a doctrine "in accord with the holy will of the Lord of Heaven."<sup>49</sup> Since *susin* is a personal and communal process into which people are encouraged to bring themselves, it invokes the forces inherent in human fellowship to rise and thus brings about unity and harmony. To the Chinese mind this was a valid argument.

### V. The Idea of God

Some of the most fundamental concepts originally apprehended or reinterpreted by Neo-Confucian scholars were the Great Ultimate (太極說), human nature (心性論), the *i-gi* (*li-ch'i*) theory (理氣說), and sincerity and seriousness (誠敬論). These were issues Ricci naturally had to tackle in his supplemental reinterpretation of the Classics and Neo-Confucianism. The traditional Neo-Confucian view Ricci criticised was based on the following general outlook.

#### *a. The Great Ultimate (太極)*

The term Great Ultimate appears in the *I Ching* in which it is said that it "generates the two primary forces [兩儀]. The two primary forces generate the four images [四象]. The four images generate the eight trigrams [八卦], from which the ten thousand things originate."<sup>50</sup> Chou Tun-I (1017-1073), generally called the pioneer of Neo-Confucianism, wrote two short treatises, the *T'ai-chi-t'u shuo* (太極圖說), *Explanation of the Diagram of the Great Ultimate*, and the *T'ung-shu* (通書), *Penetrating the Book of Changes*. Although he deals with the Great Ultimate in some extent in the latter treatise, he did not clearly explained its nature and its

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49) Ibid., p. 369. This passage reads, 故吾曰學之上志惟此成己, 以合天主之聖旨耳, 所謂由此而歸此者也。

50) Wilhelm, R., *op. cit.*, , p. 318.

relationship with other cardinal Neo-Confucian concepts, like principle, human nature and destiny. The Great Ultimate, in his view, is the Ultimate of Non-Being (無極而太極); it is "fundamentally the Non-ultimate", itself generated by the Five Elements which generate one system of Yin and Yang.

According to Chu Hsi, Neo-Confucian basic tenets can be identified in chapter 22 of Chou's *Diagram*, particularly in the first sentence, "Only the intelligent can understand the manifestations and concealments (of the operations of Yin and Yang)."<sup>51)</sup> In other words, Chu Hsi thought that it succinctly stated that substance is one but its manifestations are many.

*b. Human Nature (性)*

Chu Hsi liked to quote Ch'eng I, according to whom "nature is the same as principle."<sup>52)</sup> He went on to explain that nature is the term given to its relation to the mind, principle, and events. However, human nature is nothing but principle. One may call it nature because it was endowed in the human being by Heaven: "at the very time when a person is born, Heaven has already given him his nature."<sup>53)</sup> The inextricable relationship human nature, events and destiny share is conceived thus:

Principle is the substance of Heaven, while destiny is the function of principle. One's nature is what is endowed in man. And one's feelings are the functions of one's nature."<sup>54)</sup>

*c. "The i-gi Theory (理氣說)*

In Neo-Confucianism, *i* (principle) and *gi* (material force) are responsible

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51) *SBCP*, P. 474.

52) *Ibid.*, p. 614

53) *Ibid.*, p. 613.

54) *Ibid.*, p. 612.

for Universal Creation, as well as for all transformations that take place in nature and society. This is known as *I-Gi* Theory (理氣論). Based on this general principle, a doctrine of human nature -- or moral nature -- was formulated: *inseong-ron* (人性論), itself a paradigm for virtuous ethical conduct and the practice of self-cultivation (修養論). *I*, being universal, is the original nature of human beings (性即理). In order to apprehend the universal *i* one should investigate things and practice self-cultivation so as to extend knowledge (居敬窮理), because "moral principles are quite inexhaustible."<sup>55)</sup>

*d. Sincerity and Seriousness* (誠敬)

Sincerity (*seong* or *ch'eng*), a concept which greatly informed Chou Tun-I's teaching, stems from the *Doctrine of the Mean*.<sup>56)</sup> Understood in his *Penetrating the Book of Changes* not simply as Taoist quietism or psychological internalisation, Chou taught that sincerity is the tranquil state by which one detects both the subtle and activating force (稽) of good and evil.<sup>57)</sup> It is sincerity that sustains the sage, or in other words, "sagehood is nothing but sincerity."<sup>58)</sup> The sage is the person in an unequivocal state of sincerity. He is in accord with the Mencian doctrine of innate good nature.<sup>59)</sup> Although human nature is said to be good, good and evil come about as one's nature tilts to either side. Evil only comes about when one fails to hold onto the Mean, the highest good.<sup>60)</sup> Hence, being "infinitely pure and evident", sincerity cannot but inspire the individual to be absolutely sincere and true

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55) Ibid, p. 610.

56) Chapters 16, 20-26, 32.

57) The pictograph *chi* (稽) means an "inward spring of activity, an emergence not yet visible... at which one's direction toward good or evil is set." *SBCP*, p. 467.

58) *SBCP*, p. 466.

59) *SBCP*, 7B:25.

60) According to Chu Hsi (*Chu Tzu yü-lei*, 94:32b), good and evil refer to physical nature, and not original nature.

to moral nature.

Seriousness is the English rendering of *gyeong* (*ching* 敬) given by Percy Bruce. It seems to convey the Neo-Confucian stress on an internal state of mind that nevertheless inspires one to make efforts in handling affairs.<sup>61)</sup> Righteousness and seriousness are the counterparts for moral cultivation, as these were interpreted in Neo-Confucianism, particularly by Ch'eng I (1033-1107) who based his arguments on the following commentary from the *I Ching*:

Being straight means correctness, and being square means righteousness. The superior man applies seriousness (*ching*) to straighten the internal life and righteousness to square the external life.<sup>62)</sup>

Chu Hsi unreservedly endorsed Ch'eng I's original interpretation by reinforcing the idea of seriousness being "the first principle of the Confucian school." In this sense, the profound person will keep in mind Ch'eng I's maxims: "Be orderly and dignified...brave and austere; correct in movement and appearance; orderly in thoughts and deliberations", and "Be correct in your dress and dignified in your gaze." This is the way that the internal and the external will be in harmony.<sup>63)</sup> The individual who heeds seriousness is naturally apprehensive and careful and dare not to give free rein to oneself.

Theologically, Ricci cherished the apparent compatibility of Sangje and the God of the Bible, "whom we gaze at in silent wonder facing the nightly sky."<sup>64)</sup> He exerted himself to promote seriousness towards and delight in Heaven, *Cheon*.<sup>65)</sup> But

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61) Bruce, P. trans., *Chu Hsi, The Philosophy of Human Nature*, London: Probsthain Oriental Series, 1922. p. 439ff.

62) *SBCP*, p. 264. This being the commentary to hexagram no. 2, *K'un*, earth.

63) *SBCP*, p. 607.

64) *Ibid.*, p. 71.

65) *SBCP*, 'Mencius', 1B:3. Ricci refers to an *innate ability* to recognise and venerate One who is regarded as worthy of supreme honour, a compassionate father and mother one can call upon for pity and look to for salvation. But this compassionate outlook on the Deity, as we noted, was superseded by the argument of the great Artisan. See *TMLH*, p.73.

he had to supplement the idea of God, as it appeared in traditional sources, viz., God as Sangje, and the Great Ultimate (Principle).

*e. The God of the Bible as Sangje* (言天主上帝也)<sup>66)</sup>

In China Ricci would find out that the word *Ti* or *Shang-ti* -- or *Sangje* in Korean -- recorded in the earliest pre-Han writings, corresponded more closely to the Christian idea of God.<sup>67)</sup> He then promptly adopted Sangje for it conveyed what the Jesuit thought were the vestiges of an early theism which was then gladly strengthened.<sup>68)</sup> Sangje, possibly a personal deity associated with the cult of ancestors, was believed to govern the affairs of society and to uphold the universal order. Accordingly, in the highest imaginable stratum of Heaven there was a celestial notable, followed by a horde of lesser spirits and gods.

Sangje was a term interchangeably used with *Cheon*; the latter meaning the working of Providence<sup>69)</sup>, as in the *Book of Odes*. Both terms, however, incurred great difficulties. *Chon* was introduced during the Chu Dynasty (1122-221 B.C.E.), after the downfall of Sung (1766-1123 B.C.E.) In time it came to impart an increasingly impersonal idea of the Lord on High, until Chu Hsi himself finally associated it with principle, and rejected any 'providential interpretation' of Heaven. Sangje, notwithstanding its Jesuit equating with God, also denoted a popular Taoism

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66) Expression coined by Yu Mong-in as he criticised Seohak in his work, *O-uyadam*.

67) As does contemporary scholarship which acknowledges that the Great Ultimate, understood as a *personal other*, may be equated with the God of the Bible. On the other hand, Zhang Xingyao (1633-1715), of whom Mungello wrote at length in *The Forgotten Christians*, was convinced that *Sangje* could be traced, as *the Book of Documents* implied, to the inherent human nature or the moral sense, which is eternal. See, Mungello, D.E., *op. cit.*, p. 104.

68) In similar vein, Jong Yak-yong, widely known as Dasan, as we will see in the following chapter, reached a theist interpretation of Heaven which according to him is the source of life and morality, as it was understood in original Confucianism. See Choe Donghee, 'Dasan's Perspective on Deity' (*Dasan ui Shinkwan*), *Hanguk sasang*, vol. 15, 1977, pp. 106-134.

69) Generally speaking, Heaven was described as *cheon*, the blue sky (*cheangchangja*), *Sangje*, and principle (*i*).

deity. Therefore, it was natural that the people would entertain some logical doubts as to the singularity and providential relevance of the Christian Sovereign. The final compromise, as it were, came when a Chinese catechumen saluted the painting of Christ with the title "Lord of Heaven" (*Cheonju*), which ironically turned out to be one of the innumerable minor deities in Buddhism's spiritual spectrum.<sup>70)</sup>

Admittedly, Sangje transcends all categories, and because his substance is inexhaustible, his nature cannot be easily apprehended. Ricci seems to have found support in the *Summa Theologica*, by suggesting that there could be no better way but to employ a negative terminology, like "not", and "lack" to allude to Sangje.<sup>71)</sup> Therefore, if one uses words like "is" and "can" one will err by too great a margin.<sup>72)</sup> Taking heed of tradition, Ricci recognised the inherent good nature of human beings, as it was taught by Mencius. However, while discussing motivation, reward and punishment, he stated that because "...truth in this world is exhaustible, and goodness is limited...", those who act according to their rational faculty frequently enjoy good fortune.<sup>73)</sup>

Indeed, one may be reminded of Mencius's notion of the innate goodness and perfectibility of human nature co-relating to Ricci's mode of thought, although he would not be entirely prepared to espouse Mencius's ideas.<sup>74)</sup> Ricci could only

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70) Cronin, V. *op. cit.*, p. 56. Other terms selected to designate Christian concepts were already portrayed in Buddhism's religious parlance. Hence *Cheondang*, meaning Heaven as a dwelling place, had its counterpart in the Sanskrit *Devaloka*, the mansions of the gods. The same was true for hell (*jiok*, S. *Naraka*); angels (*cheonsa*, S. *Deva*), the devil (*magwi*, S. *Mara*). It is only natural that later in Joseon, Catholicism would be taken as if in alliance with Buddhism, as it once was in China. One can imagine the thrill and awe religious paintings would have stirred in the minds of the Chinese. *The Lady with the Child*, a picture Matteo Ricci had in his residence in Beijing, evoked a similar reaction in Ai Tien (艾天, 1546-1573), a member of the Jewish community in Kaifeng. He thought the Lady was Rebecca and would later invite Ricci to become the leader of his dwindling community. It was Ai Tien who informed Ricci and the West of the existence of the Jewish in China and the earlier penetration of Nestorianism.

71) St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, London: Balckfriars, 1964, I, q. 12, art. 9, ad.3.

72) See paragraphs 58-60 of the *TMLH*. For a rather beautiful though negative representation of *Sangje*, see pp. 94-95.

73) *Ibid.*, p. 325.

74) *Ibid.*, p. 375.



maintain and try to corroborate his speculative views vis-à-vis a welcome reference to the revered maxims of China's most remote past. He was an originalist and nothing short of essences would do. Attractive as Mencius's ideas may have seemed to him, the former's moral and mystical references did not clearly reveal a Sangje who built a world, loved his people and manifested that love for the sake of the world on "tablets of stone." It was not enough to say that by having the sense which distinguishes right from wrong (是非之心), one is aroused to compassion and moves to rescue a child about to fall in a well, as Mencius taught. Besides, the Sangje who apparently worked in history should be seen as its original agent now working to transcend history towards a perfected world-to-be, because "Our home is not in this world, but in the life to come; not among men, but in Heaven."<sup>75)</sup> Moreover, if one sincerely loves Sangje one cannot "fail to love the people He loves." And this amounts to "more than all burnt offerings and sacrifices."<sup>76)</sup> Eventually, it is reckoned, "many Chinese scholars could accept Ricci's teachings on this essential point" because, as Mencius writes:

Love is man's peaceful home, right is man's true road. To abandon the peaceful home, and not dwell in it; to forsake the true road, and not follow it, is sad indeed.<sup>77)</sup>

After underscoring the traditional concepts of *Cheon* and Sangje, the Sovereign on High, and claiming their mutual compatibility with a Christian idea of God, Ricci would subsequently introduce the notion of the specificity of the rational soul which does battle on earth to win blessings in Heaven. The Italian father explicitly claimed that he found in the ancient records of China the evidence according to which the superior men of yore did have a rational knowledge, worshipped and revered the Sovereign on High.<sup>78)</sup> While Ricci seemed to agree

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75) Ibid, p. 143.

76) Ibid, p. 52.

77) Lyall, A L., trans., *Mencius*, 7:10, London: Longman, Green and Co. 1932, p. 109.

78) *TMLH*, p. 107.

with Mencius's innate moral goodness, he could not disavow rational motivation without which a moral life could not of itself guarantee the passage to an eternal reward -- or punishment -- in the world-to-be. In other words, innate goodness should follow reason and be guided by a more profound awareness of Sangje, thus apprehended through apodictic reason and, in the Confucian context, also by *susin*.

*f. As The Great Ultimate*

Chu Hsi recognised that because principle and material force are two separate entities, they are each an entity in itself and should be distinguished from each other. According to him, principle comes before material force, but it is only when there is material force that principle finds a place to settle. Similarly, the Platonic notion of matter, in itself formless and measureless, is given shape by the eternal Ideas in order to give birth to the multitude of things. Before Heaven and Earth came into being, principle was already there. Chu Hsi then concluded that all things came from one source, i.e., the Great Ultimate (太極). In other words, Principle is the same, but material force is different. Ricci obviously contended that the Great Ultimate could be only explained in terms of principle, which was not substance and therefore should not be the source of other things. As such, it was not the source of Heaven, Earth and the ten thousand things, because "principle falls into the category of accidents."<sup>79)</sup>

Having no latitude to posit or anticipate a personal cosmic craftsman in his philosophical reflection, Chu Hsi goes on to discuss the nature of human beings and things. Indeed, no scholar could safely advocate that the Great Ultimate was a divine figure equivalent to Sangje and *Deus*.<sup>80)</sup> Even the soul (魂魄) and consciousness, being effects of material force, were certain to disintegrate after death. Accordingly, what remains in the central idea of Chu Hsi's philosophy is the Great Ultimate, which is nothing other than *i* -- Principle -- something shared by

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79) See *TMLH*, p. 111. See also *RTAH*, where the man of humanity regards Heaven and Earth and all things as one body, ch. 1, sec. 20.

80) Mungello, D.E., *Curious Land: Jesuit Accommodation and Origins of Sinology*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1989. p. 61.

all people and the ten thousand things -- "every blade of grass and every tree", as Cheng I put.<sup>81)</sup> Moreover, since principle is good, one's nature ought to be good.<sup>82)</sup> In spite of the Great Ultimate having neither spatial restriction nor physical form nor body, it manifests itself in ubiquitous ways. One cannot give it a precise phrasing, as if being were attributed to it by an accident of words, for it can only be apprehended as a rather nebulous reflection: it weaves itself into creation as spectral brilliance. In this sense, one could refer to it more metaphorically as Yi Byeok did in his *Essence of Sage Teaching*.<sup>83)</sup> Chu Hsi also upheld the common view according to which principle, like the Moon, is one but its reflections are many.

The truth, as Chu Hsi concluded, must be personally realised "by each individual himself"<sup>84)</sup> inasmuch as in Buddhism, Nirvana should be apprehended through spiritual contemplation. The Great Ultimate, being the "zenith of the sky" is the ultimate of principle for there is an ultimate in every reflection, but not a void, said Chu Hsi, as the dharma-nature doctrine of Buddhism would avow. In other words, the Great Ultimate is the compound manifestation of Heaven and Earth and all things. Its name, for want of better, only expresses its character which is utterly unfathomable, "a name to express all the virtues and the highest good in Heaven and Earth, man, and things."<sup>85)</sup>

Ricci would inescapably find fault with the interpretation of the Great Ultimate as described by Chu Hsi and acknowledged notwithstanding by a great many literati. He employed terms like "substance" and "accident" suitably transliterated in Chinese to demonstrate the incongruity of referring to Sangje as the Great Ultimate and Principle.<sup>86)</sup> When addressing the Chinese scholar in the *TMLH*

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81) For further Neo-Confucian notions of principle, see *RTAH*, ch. 1, sec. 15; ch. 3, sec. 12; ch. 12, sec. 9.

82) *RTAH*, Ch. 1, secs. 38-41.

83) There, Yi Byeok would refer to the Great Ultimate, or God, as an unfathomable potency that can blur one's senses; thus as "weaving brilliance" (緝熙).

84) *SBCP*, p. 639.

85) *Ibid.*, p. 640

on the expression "organically one", a doctrine most strongly propagated by the Cheng brothers and which had become a cardinal principle in Chu Hsi's philosophy, Ricci thus spoke through his Western scholar,

The Confucians of former times made use of the assertion that all things are organically one to encourage the common people to put their sense of humanity into operation. What they meant...was simply that things emerge from one source.<sup>87)</sup>

Ricci could not afford deviating from that path of persuasion and cultural interchange, nor failing to interpret the real motivations of the "Confucians of former times." The Great Ultimate, the thought, had been historically blurred, but one could trace smidgens of it in the past, to which "the Confucians of former times" (前世之儒) could relate. By so doing, he let his Western scholar assert that,

Our purpose is not to be teachers of men. It is simply that because we feel pity for men's mistakes we wish to lead them back to their original path and into the holy Church of the Lord of Heaven. We are all brothers and share the same father...<sup>88)</sup>

*g. Supplementing the Idea of God*

Ricci's exposition of his "revered teaching" begins with a categorising argumentation. How can it be proven, inquires Ricci, that *Sangje*, the Great

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86) For the whole discussion on Principle, as it bears on the Great Ultimate, see *RTAH.*, pp. 111-131.

87) *TMLH*, p. 229.

88) In Lancashire's *TMLH*, it is curious to find the translation of *hoe* (會) corresponding or virtually being identical in effect or function to "church" -- in the sense Westerners conceive of an organised religion or house of God -- rather than as a sacred or sage teaching (天主聖教), as Ricci emphasised. The *TMLH* was not overtly calling for an entering into religion as *sine qua non*, much less into "church." See p. 455, and pp. 186-187, where the "revered teaching" was rendered as *revered Church*. As quoted above, one could say that Ricci was focusing on a sacred teaching much in the way Yi Byeok referred to it as sage teaching (聖教).

Ultimate, is indeed the creator and father of all things? Although the Platonic rendition of God as the author only of good also characterises *Sangje* in the *TMLH*, Ricci would not concur with Plato's God, viewed sometimes impersonally as pure reason -- for that is strikingly similar to Chu Hsi's understanding of the Great Ultimate as Principle -- and at other times mythically as "maker and father", or the Artisan, which happened to be Ricci's favoured interpretation.

Thus the Italian father would argue that firstly, one should consider the fact that material things cannot come to life of their own accord. A cause external to them is essential. As an illustration, he pointed to a small bronze globe, with its sun, moon, stars, planets, mountains, and seas visible upon it. This globe, he reasoned, could not be cast unless a skilled craftsman, the Artisan, did the job. Self-creation is not a sound argument, for it presupposes the existence of a prior self, which would then impugn the necessity for self-creation. Secondly, there must be someone who gives order to the intelligent and non-intelligent fabric of relationships. Human beings, endowed with the Five Basic Virtues -- i.e., humanity, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and faithfulness -- are the most excellent and most intelligent creatures in all creation. They live amongst all other birds and beasts, down to the lowest of animals. Human beings alone are in the possession of a spiritual nature, and that puts them in a position of grace. Thirdly, the propagation of life does not uncoil *ad infinitum*, so that nothing creates or recreates itself. But one must trace existence back to a first cause; in the human instance, back to a first ancestor, the source of all things: the one "whom we term Lord of Heaven."<sup>89)</sup>

According to his adopted Scholastic-Aristotelian perspective, Ricci referred to the governing principles of things as the "four causes": active, formal, material and final. The Lord of Heaven, who is the reason for things being what they are, should be understood only in His active and final cause, for He is perfectly whole and unique and cannot be a part of matter. The distinctions drawn from these two Heavenly characteristics are only of approximation and specificity: one is either near or far; either general or particular. Dissimilarities in this world are due to the

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89) *TMLH*, p. 83.

universality of the Lord of Heaven, the source of all things. But the truth, "the whole truth" about the Lord shall never be revealed, for it is inexhaustible: one can determine similarities and dissimilarities on the basis of the four causes, and thereby come to ascertain their respective categories. Nevertheless, the Lord of Heaven transcends all categories, and only words like "not" and "lack" could more faithfully give some indication as to His nature.<sup>90)</sup>

Since principle -- as the Ultimate -- does not have intelligence and consciousness in a manner the Lord of Heaven does, it follows that it cannot produce intelligent and reflective life. One cannot give what one does not have, Ricci concluded. Moreover, by gradually evolving to fill the world with "things", principle cannot be regarded as the intelligent mover nor the generator of Yang.<sup>91)</sup> Existence itself reveals an intricate chain of relationships embracing, for example, the human soul which "embraces the souls of birds and beasts...[which] embrace the souls of vegetation," as if a numinous, stepped edifice based on each individually existential complex structure. Ricci's reliance on scholastic philosophy where man is viewed as the zenith of the creative process (which will eventually lead to one's true home in the world-to-be), made him speak of fixed categories and the three kinds of souls. He rendered vegetative soul as *Sheng-hun* (生魂), sentient soul as *Chueh-hun* (覺魂), and intellectual soul as *Ling-hun* (靈魂).<sup>92)</sup> But the Lord of Heaven embraces the nature of all things.<sup>93)</sup>

As Ricci tried to demonstrate through his Western scholar, principle is not and should not be equated with the Lord of Heaven, since in the work of creation if there were no first cause, a *Cheonju*, to serve as the source of all phenomena, neither principle nor the Great Ultimate would be able to fill this role. Ricci then suggested that the God of his "humble country" corresponded in meaning with

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90) Ibid. p. 93.

91) Ricci cites Chu Hsi's 'Commentary to the Diagram of the Supreme Ultimate', in which it is said that principle is not a thing, for there are numerous categories of things some with forms, some without them. *TMLH*, p. 115.

92) *TMLH* pp. 145, 163, 195.

93) Ibid. p. 121.

Sangje of the Chinese. By investigating Sangje one comes to comprehend that although He is without form, all reverence should be given to Him. Indeed, the same kind of reverence people in ancient times would have shown towards Heaven and Earth, as if they morally honoured their own parents. Hence, following the discussion concerning the attributes of the Lord of Heaven with his perspicacious teacher (明師), the Chinese scholar in the *TMLH* -- duly aware of *susin* -- would reach a supplemental conclusion:

our parents give us the various parts of our bodies, and we ought, therefore, to be filial towards them. Our sovereign and his ministers give us land, places to live, trees and animals so that we can practice filial piety towards our elders, and instruct and nurture our children. We ought therefore to honour them as well. But how much more should we honour the Lord of Heaven who is the great Father and Mother [大父母], the great sovereign [大君], the first Cause of all first ancestors, the One from whom all sovereigns derive their mandate and the Producer and Sustainer of all things?<sup>94)</sup>

Ricci's supplemental, rather than synthetic approach to the ancient texts reveals a co-extensive resemblance between 'original Confucianism' and Catholic teaching, insofar as it highlights the notions of ancient theism and self-cultivation. Ricci attempted to champion his truth-claims as befitting of a scholar who reviewed the past to gain new insights in the present. Perhaps one could say, only in this sense, that he set the grounds for an unparalleled "Confucian-Christian synthesis."<sup>95)</sup>

## VI. Conclusion

In substantiation of the major premise of this chapter, it has been shown that Ricci sought to disentangle the purity of monotheism of the most ancient recorded times of China, and to associate it with Catholic teaching, insofar as in the

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94) *Ibid.* p. 131. Lancashire previously noted that Ricci's Chinese scholar only too easily gives up in his dialogue with the Western scholar. This was not the case in Ricci's time, however, nor is it today. See also, p. 120.

95) Mungello, D. E., *Curious Land*, p. 63



Chinese cultural context it enlightened self-cultivation, or *susin*. In fact, Ricci recommended that for those of the inner Christian circle, sacrificial rites should be practised, though with a shift of emphasis. Agreeing with tradition he seemed convinced that

The principle of showing gratitude to one's ancestors through sacrificial rites is rooted in the human mind. Sages instituted the rites merely to bring virtue to perfection.<sup>96)</sup>

If, on the other hand, he supplemented the essentials of Christian truth vis-à-vis Confucianism in order to develop and perfect the latter -- as he acknowledged -- on the other, this should not be understood as a synthesis *per se*, in the unavoidable sense Ricci understood the Three Teachings. It may not be too farfetched to say that one can genuinely come to a supplemental understanding with a certain essential cause or tradition. However, a synthesis -- as the sort of understanding reached -- constitutes only a reflection (in Chu Hsi's sense). In being expressed, it is transformed into what amounts to be a potentially ethico-spiritual return to a quasi-immemorial tradition. This is the supplemental course Ricci took so as to offer his version of a pure monotheism and in the process, a supplemental essence.

The Ming Chinese were ready to appreciate or rather tolerate differing reflections or interpretations, provided they were traced to a common source. Consequently, in the history of Confucianism new interpreters of the tradition would arise and dispute the "claims to orthodoxy of a currently dominant type of Confucianism."<sup>97)</sup>

When the *TMLH* was finally published in 1603 Ricci had already grown in stature within the Chinese intellectual universe, particularly following the publication of *On Friendship* and his successful adoption of Valignano's extraordinary approach to his mission in China. He was aware that the ultimate status of foreigner would leave an indelible impression on him, though perhaps less so on his *chiao* (教), or

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96) *RTAH*, IX: 7, p. 226.

97) Mungello, D .E., *Curious Land*, p. 57.

*gyo* in Korean-- teaching. Indeed his ability to prove, before amazed Chinese eyes, that his *chiao* was a transmittable teaching *qua* the local tradition took him to the heights of an authentic, supplemental paradigm, and not synthesis pure and simple.

The idea of God Ricci supplemented with *Cheon* and Sangje was a means to pronounce a rational verdict on the ultimate weight of a long-lost "native heath", (本家) over which the Lord of Heaven presides and under which the human soul is veiled. This idea would have extraordinary importance when it reached Joseon's more religiously-minded scholars, as we will discuss. However, in his discourse regarding a vision-inspired response of humankind towards the Great Artisan, Ricci did not hesitate to outline an either/or interpretation, and warn that anyone found lacking foresight was bound to experience immediate troubles.<sup>98)</sup> Hence apart from the commands of the Lord of Heaven there could definitely be no other kind of mandate, superior *chiao* or fate.<sup>99)</sup> This of course contrasted with the degree of religious emphasis and tolerance he had found in China. Fortunately, in the cultural atmosphere where he launched his "teaching" (*chiao*), Ricci could afford being 'orthodox.'

The Lord of Heaven of whom the Italian Jesuit spoke was the reason for things being as they were, and should be known only as the active and final cause, since the Lord of Heaven was perfectly whole and in consequence could not be a part of matter. Ricci further encircled his defence and explanation of the idea of God by reminding one of the mysteries of the holy faith, which need be explained only to catechumens and Christians.<sup>100)</sup> If it were easy for us humans to understand the Lord of Heaven he would not be what He is. The individual existence should then strive to pursue the truth about the Lord of Heaven, itself inexhaustible. And this truth makes one feel as if staring at the sun; the more one looks at it the more blurred the vision becomes. This appeal to continuous search and personal endeavour found space and strongly resonated within the culture of *susin*.

God was "the father of all intellects", and reason lets one know that there

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98) *TMLH*, p. 305

99) *Ibid.*, p. 329.

100) Dunne, G.H., *op. cit.*, p. 96. See also, P. D'Elia, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

is a mind, an Artisan, for instance, behind a bronze globe. Surely, he was about to prove an idea, a rationally supplemental Catholic idea, and it had better conform with substance and accident, despite the fact these categories also seemed unintelligible to the more accomplished Chinese scholar -- and the more diffuse Chinese *caelis* and syntax. If he expounded a Lord of Heaven in a paternal fashion, it was always subordinate to reason, to the intellectual Artisan. Thus the notion of a God of Heart lacked vitality. Ricci's God was good and powerful and endowed with clear motivation, but He was largely the God of all intellects.

However, by juxtaposing his doctrine of the Lord of Heaven with China's original apprehension of Sangje, by emphasising the indestructibility of the good essence of man's nature<sup>101</sup>), as well as the spirit of friendship between traditions and thus trying to move men by persuasion, Ricci managed to attain a viable doctrine of the Lord of Heaven. His teaching proved capable of introducing a thought pattern that could explain "first principles" and be interpreted at least in the *TMLH* in a supplemental manner. Indeed, Ricci's *litteratus* did not fail to remind us that the Lord of Heaven, the old-venerated Sangje, is the great Father and Mother, the Producer and Sustainer of all things. Such is then the idea of God Ricci let his Chinese scholar anticipate, so that the Lord of Heaven's law could be more fully known and kept.

Our hypothesis regarding the monotheistic nature of the form of worship Ricci sought to unveil from the oldest Chinese sources seems to validate the claim for a supplemental teaching which totally contrasted with Buddhism, despite some conceptual similarities. But it was *susin*, properly informed by apodictic reason, which for Ricci constituted and reinforced the moral grounds for the *gunja* in a supplemental "community of views". This was the real issue worth of attention and, as it happened, criticism -- both in Ricci's time and later in Yi Byeok's Joseon in general, and amongst some of his Namin friends in particular.<sup>102</sup>)

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101) *TMLH*, p. 447.

102) The first reaction to the *TMLH* in Joseon, as will be discussed in the following chapter, was rather critical of Ricci's other ideas concerning the soul, rebirth, reward and punishment after death, and Heaven and Hell -- which to our purposes, are however of less importance.

## Chapter Three

### *The Seonbi and Cheonjuhak: Knowledge of the Lord of Heaven*

#### I. Introduction

The preceding chapter examined how in the *TMLH* Matteo Ricci achieved an acceptable, supplemental interpretation of Catholic teaching and Confucianism. It did so by fixing on the apparent compatibility of the God of the Bible with Sangje, the Lord on High. Ricci's work, which entered Joseon some decades after the Jesuit's death, initially did not interest Joseon's scholars at all. Some of them dismissed it as impertinent heterodoxy, the evil doctrine originated from the "Great West."<sup>1)</sup> This is what will be discussed in historical backgrounds, along with an account of the formation and development of the political factions, with particular attention to the Namin party, and the introduction of Western Learning -- Seohak -- along with the development of Silhak -- Real Learning -- in Joseon.

In our discussion of Joseon's Seohak, we will note that Yu Mong-in (1559-1623) was the first scholar who briefly commented on the new Western doctrine, the Learning of Heavens (天學). While he agreed that Ricci had reasonably equated the notion of Lord of Heaven with the classic Confucianism view of the Lord on High, Yu discounted it as an enticing evil doctrine, by making reference to Ricci's *TMLH* in his work *O-uyadam*: "The term Lord of Heaven is equivalent to Sangje."<sup>2)</sup> Yi Su-gwang (1563-1628) also commented on the subject, if only in passing. Seohak received a more thorough discussion by Yi Ik (1681-1763), whose criticisms were again reviewed rather warmly by the following Namin generation, especially by Gwon Cheol-sin (1736 -1801) and An Jeong-bok. The former emphasised the religious claims of the teaching while trying to accommodate it

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1) *TMLH*, p. 77

2) Yu M. I., 'Seohak', *O-uyadam*, tr. Yi M. S., Seoul: JeongUm Sa, 1974, pp. 90-93. In Chinese: "言天主上帝也."

within the scholarly tradition. The latter was very critical of Seohak.<sup>3)</sup>

If Yu Mong-in had recognised certain philosophical similarities between the respective traditions and acknowledged that the Lord on High could be traced to the Classics, the notion of a purposive Maker, however, clearly seemed arbitrary. This notion was shared by Hong Jeong-ha and An Jeong-bok, who privileged the naturalistic view of the dual rapport of Yin and Yang (陰陽理氣). As An contended, the ten thousand things (萬物) transform themselves. The limpid positive energy (清氣) gives form to the individual person; the turbid negative energy transforms itself into animals and plants.<sup>4)</sup> These scholars believed that although the Lord of Heaven (天主) may be said to harbour a volitional disposition, this claim was a Western fabrication which vindicated the person who yielded to Catholic heaven. It had nothing to do with the fact that Heaven displays a volitional nature (心性顯慾).<sup>5)</sup> The second major criticism concerned the immortality of the soul. Sin Hu-dam (1702--1761) stressed that the soul were grounded on the body, for if there was no body the soul would disperse. Therefore, the soul cannot be an independent entity.<sup>6)</sup>

A third difficulty concerned the existence of Heaven and Hell, which provoked no less stupefaction. In An Jeong-bok's Questions and Answers, the Lord of Heaven Doctrine and the idea of salvation in the world-to-come, as personified by Yaso (Jesus), are notions similar to the traditional view according to which the good was rewarded and the evil punished (勸善懲惡). However, the road the worthy and the sage take lies in the present world, so that virtue is to be attained here and now, regardless of what the next world may bring. In fact, Yi Ik, An's master, showed his bewilderment by reminding his fellow Namin that Cheonjuhak

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3) Gwon Cheol-sin literary work, however, is almost non-existent. In the absence of close catechetical instruction from the Jesuit mission in China, one can assume that his influence among the Namin seonbi was rather 'spiritual.' An Jeong-bok's work is extant; in this thesis we will focus on his *Questions and Answers* regarding Catholic teaching.

4) An J. B., *Collection of Sun Am (Sunamjip)*, vol. 17, n.d., under the heading, *Chonhak Mundap*.

5) Hong, J. H., *Taedongjongno*, Seoul: vol. 5. (photocopy)

6) Yi M. C., 'Seohakpeyon' (Critical Research on Seohak), *Byokwipyon*, Seoul: Yolhwadang, 1971, p. 42, 38-103. The passage reads as follows, 魂者乃依於形而爲有形既亡則消散而歸於無者也烏得爲自立之體乎.

(天主學) once categorically opposed Buddhism's doctrines, but in the end it did not seem less absurd.<sup>7)</sup> These three major criticisms demonstrate that Cheonjuhak could hardly avoid being regarded contemptuously, as a Buddhist development in Joseon.

In this thesis we will limit the scope of our discussion to the Namin criticisms of Cheonjuhak, or knowledge of the Lord of Heaven, and the three major representatives Yi Ik, An Jeong-bok, and Jeong Dasan. The latter was a Silhak scholar whose eclecticism made him a paramount figure in the country. In the subsection on Dasan we will particularly look at the way he conceived of the Deity and 'virtue', which were concepts reinforced by the intellectual and warm relationship he briefly enjoyed with Yi Byeok.

## II. Historical Backgrounds

Geographically located between China and Japan, the Korean peninsula has been inhabited for hundreds of thousands of years. Old Joseon, the first tribal nation, seems to have had its origins in 2333 B.C.E, and what is known of its religious practices indicates that the ancient people performed sacrifices to the Great Parent on High. A number of mythological accounts of this time have come down to us.<sup>8)</sup> Owing to the intermittent rise and fall of ethnic groups and the enduring influence from the tribes across River Yalu and beyond, Chinese civilisation strongly shaped Old Joseon's cultural trends.

Mythological accounts can be found in the old Sam Han (三韓) -- the Three Kingdoms -- period, in the southern part of the peninsula, but no legend is more endearing than the creational myth of Dangun, which seems to be a northern Balhae shamanistic narrative.

Korean Shamanism, according to scholars of Korean religion, is the original

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7) Yi I, *Seongho Saseol Yuseon*, (photocopy) vol. 58, Seoul: Gyeonghoe Chulpansa, 1967. 'Introduction to the True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven.'

8) For old narratives translated in English, see the still fundamental Ilyon's *Samguk Yusa, Legends and History of the Three kingdoms of Ancient Korea*, trans. by Tae Heung-ha, Seoul: Yonsei University Press 1972. The Great Parent on High may allude to Hwang-in, in the myth of Dangun.



mould for the earliest form of worship.<sup>9)</sup> Indeed, many scholars have reinforced the notion of the intimate relationship between the myth of Dangun and shamanism. Perhaps the most prominent of them is the scholar and folklorist Yi Neung-hwa. In Yi's view, Dangun -- who founded Asadal, a mythical city -- is the origin of shamanism. He based his argument on four annual sacrifices to Heaven the earliest Korean tribes performed. These ceremonies were related to the shamanistic concept of kingship, or *chachaung* (次次雄).<sup>10)</sup>

The kingdoms, *Goguryeo* in the Northeast, *Baekje* in the Southwest and *Silla* in the Southeast, in the 4th and 5th centuries C.E., saw the influence of Buddhism reaching the status of state religion, which enjoyed its golden era in 676 when the three states became United Silla (*Tong Silla*).<sup>11)</sup> After the fall of United Silla and the establishment of Goryeo (918-1392), the influence of Neo-Confucianism started to be politically relevant. Buddhism, however, remained a major force in the spiritual life of the nascent dynasty, despite efforts to de-institutionalise it.

Buddhism was not only the dominant ideological power during the Goryeo dynasty, but also a formidable political in-group holding extensive tracts of land and temples. However, corruption was endemic. Powerful monks headed various religious orders and clashed at times with the state, at times amongst themselves. These conflicts contributed to the fall of Goryeo. Sung Neo-Confucianism replaced Buddhism as the main ideological influence, and a rigidly structured, hierarchical social system evolved, which in the new dynasty came to dominate the kingdom for five centuries.

Hence, during the Joseon Dynasty (1392-1910) the Neo-Confucian paradigm became the predominant ethico-religious system and profoundly shaped the political

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9) Sin C. H., (申采浩), *Joseon Sanggosa* (朝鮮上古史), Seoul: Jongno Seogwan, 1948.

10) For a more detailed, rather nationalistic perspective on Korean Shamanism, see Yi Neung-hwa's *Jeseon Musokko* (Joseon Shamanism), Seoul: Dongmunseon, 1991; see also, *Joseon singyo wollyugo* (Origin of the Joseon's Religion of God), *Sarim* 7-3, 1922.

11) The Three Kingdom Era of Goguryeo, Baekje and Silla ended in 668 when an allied force of Silla and the Tang Dynasty overwhelmed and conquered the other two kingdoms. When Tang defeated Goguryeo, a great many people from Goguryeo fled to north Manchuria. There, uniting with the Malgal tribes of the region, they formed the state of Balhae (698 -926 C.E.)



and cultural life of the country. By the middle of the dynasty such great scholars as Yi Toegye (1501-1569), known as Korea's Chu Hsi, and Yi Yulgok (1536-1584) upheld Chu Hsi's philosophy. Although it eventually became *the* prevalent orthodoxy in Joseon -- indeed even more orthodox than in China -- Neo-Confucianism eventually failed to effectuate its ideal model of social relationships, and ended up as a private arena in which *yangbans* and party factions bitterly struggled for power.

Philosophically, earlier in the sixteenth century Toegye stressed the primacy of *principle* by developing a comprehensive explication of the primacy of *principle (i)* over *material force (gi)*. In his extensive literary career -- itself a great contribution to the *i/gi* debate -- Toegye emphasised personal experience and moral self-cultivation as the essence of learning. Yulgok, who adopted *material force* as the point of departure of his philosophical argument, came to oppose Toegye's basic notion of principle as the bestower and thus, the preceding foundation of material force. This debate, which we will note in the following pages, was known as the *Four-Seven Debate*, and became the major intellectual *nongjaeng* (dispute) of the Joseon dynasty. The ruling elite of Joseon was known as *yangban*. Originally, it was made of civilians and military bureaucrats who gradually ascended the social ladder to become the ruling class. Once at the top, social mobility became restricted, as the *yangbans* enjoyed many privileges through the civil service examination system which was also largely monopolised by them.

#### a. A Socio-Political Survey

The *Sinjin sadaebu* (新進士大夫) was a powerful political grouping during Goryeo dynasty (918-1389). In the latter period of the dynasty it split into two inner circles, the *Sarim* (士林) -- a moderate party -- and the *Hungu* (勳舊), a more radical grouping of scholars who emphasised an active participation in politics. They insisted on the necessity of making the nation militarily strong and economically stable. The Hungu party, therefore, closely cooperated with the military class to found the Joseon dynasty. But since its foundation by Yi Seong-gye in 1393, the new dynasty suffered the unenviable fate of factional contention and power struggle.

The nation was unprepared when Hideyoshi's troops landed on the

peninsula in 1592 and 1598<sup>12)</sup>; and then again in 1627 when a Manchu army of thirty thousand crossed the Yalu. These conflicts, along with internal problems, wrought severe deprivation and social confusion. The government was financially ruined, and the confusion only intensified with the destruction of many official documents which enabled many farmers to evade conscription. The period that followed the invasions witnessed an escalation in factionalism, rather than political harmony. The two old factions would split at a bewildering pace, by focusing on petty themes linked to the succession to the throne, Confucian rituals and etiquette. But the main issue was always the monopolisation of the reins of power.

As the Hungu party assumed a prominent role in the establishment of the new order, the Sarim, who gave more importance to loyalty and justification to the philosophical web of Confucian relationships, withdrew to the rural areas and there educated many bright *seonbi*. Eventually they ascended to court politics in the fifteenth century, during the reign of King Seongjong (r. 1469-1494), who tried to restrain the overwhelming Hungu influence and overcome the political difficulties by relying on the Sarim. It was a period in which three consecutive *sahwas* (士禍) or "purges of literati" took place.<sup>13)</sup> These were events that badly debilitated the factions. The Sarims eventually seized the political power in the latter part of the 16th century.

If the *Sinjin sadaebu* originally split themselves into Hungu and Sarim, the latter, once in power, would again split into Seoin (Westerners) and Dong-in (Easterners). The Seoin philosophically espoused *jugiron* (主氣論) -- the view that privileged material force (*gi*) and phenomenal experience. They sought to tackle the existing conflicts in a more unequivocal way. These were the scholars from the

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12) Following the murder of Oda Obunaga (1534-1582), the general Toyotomi Hideyoshi (1536-1598) seized control of Japan and unified it. He entertained dreams of Japanese expansion reaching as far as India. In Korean, the first incursion is called *Imjinwoeran* (壬辰倭亂), where *Imjin* is the name of the year (1592), and *woeran*, the Japanese invasion; and *Jeongyujaeran* (丁酉再亂), the second repeat invasion, for the year 1598.

13) For an argument on the literati purges, see Yi Doek-il, *Sahwa-ro boneun Joseon Yeoksa* (Joseon History Viewed From the Perspective of the Literati Purges), Seoul: Seokpil, 1998. See also, Yi I Hwa's series on Korean History (한국사 이야기), vol. 13, *Dangjaeng gwa Jeongbyeon-ui Soyongdolri* (Whirlpool of Party Strife and Coup d'Etat), Seoul: Hangilsa, 2001.

Giho (畿湖) provinces. But in Joseon political stability seemed rather unattainable. Surely enough, Han Woo Keun noted that factional strife,

occurred the more readily because the Confucian system made no provision for opposing points of view, or for compromise. It was assumed that there was always a single policy that was right, and all the others were wrong. There was no way to mediate disputes... The most minute points of Confucian doctrine or etiquette could be pretexts for factional attacks.<sup>14)</sup>

The "real motivations" for these attacks, we are reminded, were "personal animosity and desire for power."<sup>15)</sup>

The Dong-in party, on the other hand, had their stronghold in the Yeongnam province and stressed *juriron*, the ultimate role of principle, or Neo-Confucianism's ethereal principle (理). They also divided themselves into Bukin party (北人) -- Northerners -- following the scholarship of Cho Sik, and Namins (南人) -- Southerners -- who followed Yi Toegye's scholastic mantle. The Bukin held power during the brief tenure of Gwanghae-gun (1608-1622), and were ejected in 1623 in the reform promoted by King Injo (r. 1623-1649). At this time there remained only two parties, the Seoin and the Namin. Historically, it will become the time that *Bungdang jonchi* (朋黨政治) -- factionalism -- would greatly intensify.<sup>16)</sup>

Indeed, in the wake of *Imjinwoeran*, the Japanese invasion of 1592, the Bukin faction soon split over the succession, as King Seonjo (r. 1567-1608)'s queen died without leaving a direct successor to the throne. Gwanghae-gun, his son with one of the concubines, became the Crown Prince. But the king married again, and the second queen bore him a son. This led to an intense factional dispute to the throne. The struggle was so bitter that [Gwanghae-gun] "was never given a posthumous title because of the hatred of the victorious Westerners [*Seoin*]."<sup>17)</sup>

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14) Han, W. K., *The History of Korea*, Seoul: Eul-Yoo Publishing Co., 1970, p. 262.

15) Ibid.

16) It may be said that factionalism helped the dynasty to balance itself, as the Namins were in power in 1659 and 1674; the Seoins, in 1680, 1689 and 1694. But *Bungdang jeonchi* would in the end lose its self-checking nature by falling into open inter-party dissension and strife.

17) Ibid., p. 276.

Gwanghae-gun eventually prevailed, only to be replaced by his nephew in 1623, who became King Injo (r. 1623-1649). The Bukin faction thus lost power to the Seoins, who were nevertheless split over the 1623 *coup d'etat* that ousted Gwanghae-gun. The next kings had relatively less problematic reigns, as factional strife somewhat subsided until 1674 with the death of king Hyojong's wife.

When King Hyojong (r. 1649-1659) died, the Namin ousted the Seoin, but not without an increment of factional strife until King Sukjong (r. 1674-1720) was old enough to choose sides. Thus the Namin party held the power, albeit only temporarily, with Sukjong's ascension. In 1694 they were again replaced by the same Seoin, and subsequently eliminated from politics for good.

Later in the 18th century the factions branched off into two distinct cliques, the Norons (老論) and the Sorons (小論). Philosophically, the former clearly privileged 'material energy' (as opposed to 'principle') and became active in Chungcheong provinces and around the capital. The latter were an 'aberration' as they defied the all-encompassing Neo-Confucianism orthodoxy to become concerned with Wang Yang Ming's "mind-only" philosophy. They would basically confine themselves to Ganghwa island, and thus were called Ganghwahakpa (江華派).

During the reign of King Yeongjo (r. 1724-1776) the Norons managed to crush all other parties and thus monopolise power. This had a profound effect in terms of how the dynasty was able to operate, particularly in its most important function: *gwago* (科擧) or the civil examination system. The candidates who did not belong to the party in power could not expect to pass, as the exams were not adequately administered and marked. Even if successful, a candidate was not guaranteed automatic appointment, as officially expected. This situation deeply affected the nation in general and the yangban class as a whole. Scores of yangbans were out of office either temporarily or permanently, and so they had to rely on the government for subsidies. They turned their attention to private academies, or *seowons* (書院) which had been established during the reign of King Seonjo.<sup>18)</sup>

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18) Before the foreign invasions the seowons were concentrated largely in the Gyeongsang Province, and the scholars descended mostly from the Namins.

The inherent contradiction between Joseon's aristocratic origins and Confucianism ideals of government only subverted, rather than validated, the kind of orthodoxy with which either the Norons or the Sorons sought to govern the nation. Meanwhile, new patterns of a landholding system gradually emerged in the ruined countryside. The king became the owner of vast tracts of land, palaces, government offices and military posts. Other important economic activities, as salt-making, forestry and fisheries were also controlled by the Royal Palace. The contradiction of administering and taxing land which in fact belonged to the king and the great Noron landlords made the government revenues dwindle. Lower land taxes were exacted from the farmers, but the government created various other impositions which made their burdens even heavier.<sup>19)</sup> The situation persisted until 1750, when the military tax was halved. But the yangbans were exempted from taxation.

On the other hand, the relative improvement of agricultural technology also helped the farmers to alleviate some of their burdens. Commercial activities, once considered with contempt by Confucian standards, were becoming a necessary evil as the government allowed tribute contractors and licensed merchants to deal with them. Eventually, measures designed to control wholesale activities became ineffective, as demand for brassware, porcelain and hemp cloth increased in most cities. Even the yangban living in the capital went into business: both in the capital and in the countryside wealth began to dictate one's social status. Traditional class distinctions became an arena in which one could buy oneself into the yangban caste, by producing forged pedigrees or conniving with census officials who could alter one's records. It was in such an environment of political bickering and social turmoil that Joseon scholars, notably those long driven from court politics, as the Namin Yi Ik, proposed a fairer system of government based on the 'realities' of the people. Silhak, or Real Learning, would attempt to inspire the long-awaited 'revolution.' It was also the time Seohak -- Western Learning -- was more deeply examined since its introduction by the Jesuits in China in the sixteenth century.

Therefore, socially and intellectually, the squabbles and intrigues at court,

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19) Ibid. pp. 305-307.

coupled by the perceived sterility of Neo-Confucian thought stirred a spirit of inquiry in few but remarkable scholars. It was under these circumstances that Wang Yang Ming's philosophy and Seohak entered Joseon, and the bibliographical study of Chinese Classics and Silhak developed.

*b. Joseon Neo-Confucianism*

Joseon Neo-Confucianism can be traced to the end of Goryeo dynasty, during which time Buddhism, as we have noted, had become corrupt and objectionable. Goryeo's scholars tried to reform Buddhism by adopting Sung Neo-Confucianism. It became the paradigmatic thought current that prevailed in the kingdom. Other philosophical trends, however, had a relative impact in the way the political and scholarly classes came to dominate the reigns of power and develop their scholarship. Wang Yang Ming (1472-1529)'s mind-only philosophy and the writings of Lao Tzu and Chuang Tzu had a small but seemingly passionate audience. Furthermore, in the eighteenth century Silhak exerted a strong influence amongst the more sensitive scholars of the time. Some Namins, like Yi Ik in the eighteenth century, became devoted Silhak thinkers.<sup>20)</sup>

According to the Neo-Confucian doctrine *i* (principle) and *gi* (material force) are responsible for universal creation, as well as for all the transformations that take place in nature and society. This is known as *i-gi* Theory (理氣論). Based on this general principle, a doctrine of human nature -- or moral nature -- was formulated: *inseong-ron* (人性論), a paradigm for virtuous ethical conduct and the practice of self-cultivation (修養論).

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20) For authoritative bibliographical sources on Korean Neo-Confucianism in Korean, see Chang Myeong-jong, *Hanguk Cholhak-sa* (History of Korean Philosophy), Seoul: Ilsan-sa, 1969; *Hanguk Sasang-sa* (History of Korean Thought), Seoul: Ilsan-sa, 1981; *Toegye wa Yulgok ui Cheolhak* (The Philosophy of Toegye and Yulgok), Seoul: Dong-a University Press, 1987. Yi Byeong-do, *Jaryo Hanguk Yuhak-sa Cheogo* (Notes on Bibliographical Material on the History of Korean Confucianism), Seoul: Seoul National University Press, 1959; '*Hanguk Yuhak-sa*' (History of Korean Confucianism), Seoul: Asea Munhwa-sa, 1987. For Wang Yang Ming's influence in Joseon, see Gim Gyo-bin, *Yang Myeong Hakja Jeong Jae-du ui Cheolhak Sasang* (The Thought of Jeong Jae-du, a Wang Yang Ming Scholar), Seoul: Hangilsa, 1995. Gim Gil-hwan, *Hanguk Yang Myeong-hak Yeongu* (Research on Korean Yang Myong Philosophy), Seoul: Ilji-sa, 1981.



Principle is the original nature of human beings (性即理), and in order to apprehend the universal *i* one should investigate things and practice self-cultivation so as to extend knowledge (居敬窮理). Furthermore, rituals (禮) ought to be duly observed, if the seonbi is to reign over human ambitions and passions, and thus preserve the natural laws (存天理去人欲). This outlook on life permeated and informed the political, societal and economical spheres. Consequently, it would be fair to state that Neo-Confucianism had more than an idealistic aura to it, since it became the 'prevailing ideology.'

Joseon Neo-Confucianism sought to maintain society's law and order by focusing on the stringent social status (名分論) which stressed positions and roles. This was justified by referring to Confucius' rendition of "retification of names" (正名), according to which roles are naturally ascribed to subjects and subordinates, the honorable and the low, the gentry and the lowborn. Such a *Weltanschauung* -- *i-il bunsuron* (理一分殊論) -- informed all forms of social relationships, as it both moderated and stratified them. Despite the traditional notions of benevolent government (仁政), absolute virtue (德治), kingly virtue (王道政治) and 'taking the people as the origin' (民本思想), Neo-Confucianism offered an ineluctable perspective on history: the world could be represented as a hierarchy of classes and order. Once politically espoused, it underscored and tackled the problems inherent to a dying dynasty, Goryeo, so as to ideologically orient the new Joseon dynasty.

To be sure, Neo-Confucianism was not the only 'ideology' that came under scrutiny in Joseon. The thoughts of Lu Chiu-yüan (陸九淵, 1139-1193) and Lü Tsu-ch'ien (呂祖謙, 1137-1181) were also studied. Lu rejected what he saw was an overemphasis on details, as advocated by Chu Hsi, and superfluous writing. Rather, he advocated the supreme role of the mind in both moral cultivation and intellectual pursuit. To him 'mind is principle' (心即理); therefore, nothing is outside the Way and there is no Way outside things. This naturally contrasted with Chu Hsi's idea of investigating principle *in* things, because according to Lu, all principles are inherent and complete in one's mind. Although the idealism of Lu was not so pervasive as Chu Hsi's orthodox doctrine, it culminated in the philosophy of Wang Yang Ming which overshadowed the rational wing of Neo-Confucianism late in the Ming period (1368-1644).



These two branches of thought found representative advocates in Goryeo: Yi Saek (李穡 1328-1396) and Jeong Mong-ju (鄭夢周 1337-1392) -- who formed a moderate faction -- on one side, and the more radical scholars, Jeong Do-jon (鄭道傳 1337-1398) and Cho Jun (趙浚 1346-1405) on the other side. Whilst the former remained faithful to the kingly way and focused on the *Spring and Autumn Annals*, the latter sought to change the kingly way by emphasising the need to reform the rule of right, which would give higher leverage to the military class. The foundation of Joseon had much to do with those who pursued the radical path, particularly Jeong Do-jon, who was the systematiser of the three fundamental aspects of Joseon Neo-Confucianism, i.e., the *i-gi* theory, the Four Beginnings and Seven Emotions (四端七情) and the issue of Self-Cultivation.

Yi Hwang (Toegye) and Yi I (Yulgok) were the scholars who fundamentally shaped Chu Hsi's Neo-Confucianism in the country. In his correspondence with Gi Dae-seung (1527-1572), Toegye refined his interpretation of *i-gi*: the so-called Four Beginnings (四端) are produced by *i*, and *gi* simply would follow; the Seven Emotions (七情) stem from *gi*, on which *i* would only mount. Toegye called it *Mutual Disclosure of i and gi* (理氣互發說). Gi Dae-seung challenged Toegye's views, as he thought that one cannot dissociate *i* from *gi*, although he emphasised the role of *gi* over *i*-- a view Yulgok also espoused. Toegye was the chief proponent of Chu Hsi's ideas as he dwelt on them in a very consistent way: moral mind and self-cultivation were the foundation stone.

### c. *Seohak* (西學)

Historically it is reckoned that Jeong Du-won acknowledged the Jesuit activities in China. In 1631 he brought the first telescope.<sup>21)</sup> But it was Yu Mong-in first wrote on the religious import of *Seohak* and quoted Ho Yun, another special emissary, in his *O-uyadam*:

Cheonjugyo [Catholicism] is already active within the Southern barbarians

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21) Sent as an emissary (陳奏使) to Ming China, Jeong Du-won (鄭斗源) brought some Western instruments with him, along with Ricci's treatise on astronomy (天文圖).

[borders] and there is a remarkable number of worshippers [尊信者] amongst them. But in our country it is virtually unknown. When [our emissary] Ho Yun returned from China he brought a map and twelve literary pieces.<sup>22)</sup>

In 1603 Yi Gwang-jeong brought Ricci's *mapa mundi* -- composed in Chaoqing in 1584 -- to the country and it was examined by Yi Su-gwang in his *Collected Work of Chibong* (芝峰類說), along with a brief criticism of Ricci's *TMLH* and *On Friendship*. In fact, Yi Su-gwang himself went to China three times, in 1590 and 1597, but it was in his last journey in 1611 that he got hold of the above works by Ricci. He commented that the map was "rich in details and the geographic dimensions are all fine and most satisfactory...[that] one may rightly call it a precious thing."<sup>23)</sup> On the other hand, other scholars like Sin Hu-dam, sought to investigate the philosophical grounds of the works written by Ricci himself, Simbiasi and Giulio Aleni. But these first references to the Jesuit literature were rather unelaborated. It was only towards the end of the eighteenth century that a special group of Namin seonbis re-examined Seohak's claims concerning the old tradition, mathematics, geography, astronomy and religion.<sup>24)</sup>

#### d. *Silhak* (實學)

*Silhak* -- Real Learning -- is the general denomination of a scholarly approach that also reemerged in the seventeenth century. Directly related to Yu

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22) Quoted in Choe S. J., *Dongseo Munhwa Gyoryusa Yeongu* (Research on East-West Cultural Interchange), Seoul: Somunhwa-sa, 2nd. ed., 1990 p. 221.

23) Quoted in Yi W. S., *Joseon Sidae Saronjip -- An(Hanguk) kwa Pak (Segye) ui Mannam ui Yeoksa*, (Collection of Historical Records of Joseon Dynasty -- The Historical Encounter of Inside (Korea) and Outside (World)), Seoul: Nutinamu, 1993, p. 137.

24) One may argue that Catholic presence entered Joseon during the Japanese invasions (1592-1598), but given the circumstances, it is highly improbable that Christian teaching reached beyond the Japanese troops stationed in the Korean peninsula. Although Joseon nationals were put to death during the persecutions in Japan early in the seventeenth century, they seem to have been introduced to Catholic doctrine in Japan and not in Joseon. Nine out of the two hundred and five people who faced martyrdom, it is reckoned, were from Joseon.

Hyeong-won (柳馨遠 1622-1673), Silhak (實學) is however germane to the Cheng-Chu (Neo-Confucianism) tradition. It rejected Goryeo's penchant for flowery compositions, by favouring the study and practice of *gung-gyeong haengsu* (窮經行修) -- self-cultivation -- as this appears in the Chinese Classics. Hence, Silhak emphasised sincerity of mind (實心), rectitude of government (實政) and personal cultivation (修己治人). These concepts stem from China's Three Dynasties, but the Cheng-Chu tradition itself privileged a real learning in one's extension and practice of knowledge.

The seonbi, similar to the Jesuit who would have practiced his "spiritual exercises",<sup>25)</sup> needed to actualise the four virtues (四端) of benevolence, justice, propriety and wisdom and thus, the emphasis on *gung-gyeong haengsu*. Gwon Geun (權近 1352-1409), at the end of the Goryeo dynasty, was the first scholar who gave special attention to Silhak, as he introduced Neo-Confucianism in his work *Ibhak dosol* (入學圖說).<sup>26)</sup> As a result, in the beginning of the Joseon dynasty the literati sought to 'practically' actualise the notions of moral excellence (正心修德) and personal cultivation (修己養性), which remained cardinal concepts throughout the dynasty.

Furthermore, the term "Silhak" often appears in a book entitled *Myeongjae yugo* (明齋遺稿) written by the Joseon seonbi Yun Jung (1629-1714). In it the most fundamental trait demanded from the scholarly class was sincerity -- *seongsil* (誠實). Sincerity, a fundamental concept in Neo-Confucianism in general and in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, in particular, was duly acknowledged by Song Si-yeol (宋時烈 1607-1689), Yun Jung's teacher. The latter affirmed that by reading Chu Hsi's works the scholar would find nothing but *seongsil*.

Yun advocated a break with tradition, so as to promote measures dealing more effectively with the harsh socio-economic realities of the period. He affirmed that the emphasis should be on the welfare of the people, rather than on sterile

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25) For Loyola's work, see A. Mottola's translation: *Spiritual Exercises*, New York: Image Books, 1964.

26) The Chu-Cheng tradition appeared in the later period of the Sung dynasty, and became the generally accepted norm under the Mongols. In the Korean peninsula, it was 'imported' during the reigns of King Chungyeol (1274-1303) and King Chungseon (1308-1313).

philosophical investigation. One should thoroughly investigate things, insofar as the inquiry was guided by and towards *seongsil*. According to Yun the concept of *seongsil* implied sincerity of mind (實心), knowledge concerning immediate reality (實切) and real virtue (實德). In his words, it is from sincerity of mind that knowledge of 'immediate reality' would arise<sup>27)</sup>:

The pundits [講官] at court would fully expound about the works dealing with sages and worthies. As I carefully listened to them I wondered how one would accomplish the "Essence of Sageness" [聖學輯要] as this appears in the Classics [四書五經]. It would be appropriate [實效] if the King were to be lectured on the Classics again. Chu Hsi reported to the throne and argued that the proper method for reading should be based on immediate reality [實切]. One should read the books personally, but if what lies far cannot be sincerely investigated, let one ask the ordinary people.<sup>28)</sup>

The Silhak movement, as noted, resurfaced during the seventeenth century, and amongst the reformers of the eighteenth century it undergirded the maxim: the kings are not as indispensable as the people. Consequently, they sought to turn their attention to the rather somber reality of the people.

However forward-looking the Silhak scholars may have been, they were also committed to the fundamental Confucian truth according to which the history of the past holds the solution to present disorders (*ongojisin* 溫古知新). As we have previously argued, this was a notion Matteo Ricci made full use of as he wrote the *TMLH*. The Silhak seonbi gave relief to old Chinese concepts purportedly based on the *Chou li*, a work describing the practices deemed necessary for a just territorial division and administration. This was a major concern for Yu Hyeong-won, who tried to tackle the rapacious landholding system in which the farmers were invariably overtaxed and ill-treated.

Yu criticised the prevailing Neo-Confucian emphasis on the proverbial saying, "regulation of oneself, and ordering one's family affairs (修身齊家)," and

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27) Han W .K., *The History of Korea*, Seoul: Eul-Yoo Publishing Co., 1970., p. 193.

28) Yun, J., *Myeongjae Yugo*, vol. 3., poem entitled "Yugam" (有感). Quoted in Han, W.K., *Joseon Sidae Sasangsa Yeongu Nongo* ('Studies on Joseon Dynasty Historical Thought'), Seoul: Iljogak, 1996, p. 194.

"disciplining the mind by fostering one's nature" (治心養性). He argued that the focus should fall on socio-political equality, thus de-emphasising the pursuit of self and factional benefit of a well-bred and long established yangban class. Therefore, the government, he claimed, should consider the people as the foundation of its own existence and political justification. This he called *minbon* (民本), that is, taking the people as the origin. This outlook on life inspired a generation of scholars, particularly from the ousted Namin faction, to which Yi Ik, An Jeong-bok, Jeong Dasan and Yi Byeok belonged.

### III. Joseon's Seohak

Seohak entered Joseon as a compendium in its scientific and doctrinal form.<sup>29)</sup> Yi Su-gwang brought many books written by the Jesuits to Joseon, and amongst these were scientific introductions to Western ideas. Given the socioeconomic and political problems of the country, European science and technology served to spread the seeds of Silhak thought.<sup>30)</sup> The movement was spearheaded by scholars like Yi Su-gwang himself, Bak Se-dang and Han Baek-gyeom.<sup>31)</sup>

Seohak was of special interest because it managed to approach Confucianism by introducing science and Western religious concepts into China, which had been evaluated with a relative degree of success, and this of course helped to attract the scholarly attention in Joseon. Nevertheless, Seohak's ethical norm was eventually considered heretical, for it challenged Joseon's established

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29) The great majority of the books that circulated in Joseon included, for instance, treatises of geometry and brief expositions of the Catholic doctrine in the same edition. One can safely assume that the doctrine was a legitimate part, or by then perceived as such, of a Western scientific compendium.

30) Choe, M. H., *Hanguk Geundae Cheolhaksa (A Modern History of Korean Philosophy)*, Seoul: Song Mun Sa, 1978, p. 150.

31) One may argue that Yu Hyeong-won was the first of a list of such scholars. For a brief discussion on the thought of this scholar see Choe, M. H., *op. cit.*, pp. 150-156 and Kum J. T., *Hanguk Silhak Sasang Yeongu (Research on Korean Silhak Thought)*, Seoul: Jipmundang, 1987. pp. 28-30.

indisputable orthodoxy. It was so because the Western doctrine tried to accommodate within the greater, original ethico-religious tradition and to highlight the scientific accomplishments of the West which could be also employed in the East. This latter idea was characteristic of the Silhak spirit, which briefly flourished during the reign of King Jeongjo.

In a nutshell, the introduction and criticism of Seohak in Joseon may be divided in four distinct periods: 1) the literary cumulative period when the Jesuit works produced in China freely entered the country during the reigns of Seonjo (r.1567-1608) and Yeongjo (r.1724-1776); 2) the arousal and criticism of Seohak's religious thought during King Jeongjo (r.1776-1800); 3) the suppression of Seohak, denounced as an unlawful teaching (禁教) during the reigns of Sunjo (r.1800-1834) and Gojong (r.1864-1907); and 4) the literati unchanging attitude of rejecting the wicked, preserving the correct doctrine, i.e., to safeguard the order and cast-off heterodoxy, an idea previously established in the initial phase of the criticism of Seohak. This attitude, it should be noted, lasted to the very end of the dynasty in 1910, despite the forced opening of the country to the West. In this study we will historically focus on the second period.

#### a. *Critical Foundations*

Some of Yu Hyeong-won's ideas, particularly in the field of epistemology, guided the posterior scholarship which criticised Cheonjuhak as meaningless fantasy. Yu thought that any knowledge not grounded on reality and experience could not lead to truth. On the other hand, he also argued that cognitive positivism, when categorically affirmed, could become dogma -- of which Joseon's Neo-Confucianism was a prime example -- and when categorically denied, lead to scepticism. If on the one hand, human knowledge should not be confined to experience only, on the other, it should not be sought beyond cognition for this would be another way of fantasising on the meaningless: to claim as Seohak did, for instance, that Heaven had transcendental volition. Human knowledge, he held, was limited and as such, always imperfect.

Yi Ik, who succeeded Yu Hyeong-won, was the first scholar to



demonstrate a more encompassing interest towards Seohak, although this interest would remain largely restricted to the scientific, as opposed to the religious, contribution Western thought and technology represented. Hence, he seemed to have clearly distinguished between Seohak's scientific and religious aspects. It may not be entirely surprising, therefore, that the later generation, either embraced a more stringent view of Seohak or adopted a more lenient, supplemental approach. Representative of the former group are Sin Hu-dam (1702-1761) and An Jeong-bok (1712-1791), and in the latter, Gwon Cheol-sin (1736 -1801) and Yi Byeok (1754-1786). Perhaps in a neutral zone, despite or because a previous engagement with Seohak, was Jeong Dasan.

One can say that the Seohak-Cheonjuhak orientation drew a line between both camps, as the neutral zone represented by Dasan may be closer to an originalist approach, similar in kind to the Chinese scholar Zhang Xingyao who tried to historically justify Seohak and supplement Confucianism, as for instance in his stance on the Rites Controversy. Zhang understood Jesus as transcending fortune and misfortunes.<sup>32)</sup>

This division within the Namin party became more evident in the wake of Yi Ik's criticism and the influence he exerted over the whole group.

*b. Yi Ik (1681-1763)*

Yi Ik was the Silhak scholar who, out of plain curiosity, researched the literature written by the Jesuits in China and critically deepened the degree of academic discussion in the country. This is something the former critics of Seohak only briefly did. He became particularly impressed by the world maps and Emmanuel Dias' brief account of cosmology (天問略). In addition, he commented on the principles of irrigation written by Sabatino de Ursis, Dias's Western theory of cosmology, Adam Schall's discussion of astronomical phenomena and geography, and Ricci's translation of Euclid. Although Yi Ik clearly privileged Seohak's scientific contribution, he also wrote on the basic ethico-religious texts by Ricci and Pantoja,

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32) Zhang X., 'A Discussion of Sacrificial Rites' (*Sidian shuo*) Rome: Jesuit archives, Japonica-Sinica I, 40/7a., n.d.



e.g., the *TMLH* and the *Chilgeuk*.<sup>33)</sup>

Yi Ik did not deny that such articles of faith as the doctrine of Heaven and Hell, the Lord of Heaven, the incarnation of the spirit (降神) and physical perfectibility (成肉身) were mere meaningless. But he was not convinced. He explained that in China even the foolish would be mystified if the vestiges of real things could not be traced back to an origin, but in the West one could become even more mystified when unfounded vestiges, as the idea of a God-Artisan, are pursued.<sup>34)</sup> In this he was reasoning with Yu Hyeong-won, who as we have mentioned, stressed the contingent nature of knowledge and the meaninglessness of posing an event -- or 'vestiges' -- not related to experience. This is precisely what Yi Byeok would affirm in his *Essence of Sage Teaching*, as we will see in the following chapters.

Although Yi Ik explained away the miracles and the more mystical elements in Cheonjuhak, he thought there were points in common between traditions. For instance, he correlated Diego de Pantoja's *Chilgeuk* (七克) with Confucianism's doctrine of self-abnegation (克己說), by observing that the work of this Jesuit was a keen metaphor which greatly helped a renewed Confucian commitment to the practice of self-abnegation, and self-expenditure. Consequently, he came to believe that both Cheonjuhak and Confucianism shared a common element insofar as the

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33) Since Yi Ik's criticisms were largely paraphrased by his disciple An Jeong-bok, we will focus on the latter's *Questions and Answers* regarding Cheonjuhak.

34) Yi Ik, *op. cit.*, ch. 55. It should be noted that it was Pantoja who wrote the Jesuit account of the Passion of Christ (龐子遺詮) which appeared in Beijing in 1608-1610. The edition was revised for a prayer book edited in 1628. If on the one hand, the Jesuits tried to de-emphasise the crucifixion, for they were afraid it would only damage the reception of Christianity among the Chinese at large, on the other hand this was in accord with Ricci's general non-emphasis on original sin, because it conflicted with the Confucianism belief in the basic goodness of human nature. See Mungello, D., *The Forgotten Christians of Hangzhou*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1994. pp. 85, 88. But as Ross has pointed out, baptism, in its minimum but valid form was usually carried out by a eunuch or by other women within the imperial palace, and the vexing question about the crucifixion was at least fully introduced to the converts who were always carefully instructed about this. Ross also cites Giulio Alenis' book of the life of Christ, *Tian zhu Jiangshing Chuxiang Jingjie*, which included illustrations of the crucifixion and the events as described in the Passion. The Kangxi Emperor is said to have composed a poem giving praise to the death on the Cross. See Ross, A.C., *A Vision Betrayed*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1994., pp. 181, 197.

ethico-religious aspect of both traditions could communicate a meaningful understanding of 'moral reality.' Indeed, he seemed to be willing and ready to challenge the rigid Neo-Confucian orthodoxy of his time, by suggesting that the belief element in Cheonjuhak could be compared to the rational element in Confucianism. This approach was passed on to the later Namin scholars who came to study under his scholastic mantle.

Yi Ik's family was linked to the Giho Namins (畿湖南人). His father, Yi Ha-sin, having been an envoy to Beijing in 1677, brought home some Seohak literature produced by the Jesuits. However, the senior Yi fell in disgrace with the Noron faction and was exiled to Unsan, Pyeongan Province, where Yi Ik was born to his second wife, which made him an immediate 'outcast'. One year later Yi Ik's father died and he was educated by his older brother Yi Cham, who eventually died in prison for having challenged the Noron authority in a letter addressed to the king. This led Yi Ik to give up the civil examinations and concentrate on his studies and Real Learning. He subsequently moved to Geyonggi Province and there adopted Seongho as his *nome de plume*.

Seongho's reaction to Seohak, as we have noted, was rather ambiguous for he seemed to be at the same time both fascinated and bewildered. After reading roughly twenty books written by the Jesuits, Western manufacturing techniques and astronomy deeply impressed him. He agreed that the Western calendar system seemed flawless, as it could explain and predict solar and lunar eclipses. In the same book which explained these eclipses, Matteo Ricci's translation of Euclid's geometry, however, was the most interesting work he read, and he also praised Western methods of education. Seongho was bewildered by the assertion that an ancient sage -- Jesus -- was to return to life. Catholic teaching, however, seemed an aberration, particularly the doctrine of Heaven and Hell.

Seongho had a broad range of interests. As a Silhak scholar he gave particular importance to farming and a deeper sense of national identity. In this he was not an exception, as the disturbed state of society led many people to look for new methods of learning which could alleviate some of the most benumbing problems at hand. Seongho formulated an agricultural system he called *hanchollon* (限田論), which called for a restructuring of land holdings. Away from the epicenter

of power, he wrote that the yangban caste should participate in farming (士農合一); that the very caste system should be redefined; the slaves fully emancipated and all superstitious practices abolished. Metaphysical cerebrations were not much favoured.

As a Namin, Seongho followed Yi Toegye's interpretation of Neo-Confucianism, and became the great systematizer of Silhak thought in Joseon's later period. He compiled *A New Criticism of the Four Seven Debate* (四七新編) which clearly brought him in accord with his master.<sup>35)</sup> Displaying a broad range of interests he tried to re-arrange the bibliographical study of the Classics. This he did in the *Jilseo* (疾書) in which he started with the book of Mencius (*Mencius*), all the way through the *Ta-hsüeh* (Great Learning), the *Lun-yü* (Analects), the *Chung yung* (Doctrine of the Mean), the *I Ching* (Book of Changes), the *Shu Chuang* (Book of Documents) and the *Shi Jing* (Book of Odes), thus contradicting the long established order which had set the Great Learning, the Analects, the Book of Mencius, and the Doctrine of the Mean as the proper reading order of the Classical texts. According to Seongho, the sage should find his way from Mencius, because, as Mencius himself wrote, "the sage is the ultimate standard of human relations."<sup>36)</sup> This approach, as professor Kum Jeong-tae stressed, is "not a deductive method from the start... but something concrete and based on experience which shows the importance of a practical methodology."<sup>37)</sup>

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35) The *Four-Seven Debate* (四端七情) was the most lasting and influential controversy in Joseon's learned circles. It started with the correspondence Toegye had with Gi Dae-seung. In the course of their correspondence, the emphasis was on the priority of *i* over *gi*. The counter-argument came with another set of scholars, Yulgok and Song Hon, who wrote to each other on the subject, though for Yulgok the Tao Mind and the Human Mind were preferred terms. He emphasised *gi* rather than *i*. The whole argument bore on Mencius' reference to the four feelings (四端) in his discussion of the goodness of human nature; the seven feelings (七情) were taken as alluding to the seven emotions as found in the *Book of Rites*, though in the *Doctrine of the Mean* (1:4) they appear only as four. For a contemporary study on the subject see Edward Y.J. Chung, *The Korean Neo-Confucianism of Yi Toegye and Yi Yulgok, a Reappraisal of the Four-Seven Thesis and its Implications for Self Cultivation*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1995.

36) Yi Ik, *Seongho Sonseng Jeonjip*, ch. 49, vol. 3. Seoul: Yogang Chulpansa, 1984. The passage is in the preface to *Mengja Jilseo* (孟子疾書序) and reads in Chinese: 孟子辯而七編作, 以世則後, 以義則詳, 後則近, 詳則著, 故曰求聖人之旨, 必自孟子始. See also, *Mencius* 4A:2. See also *SBCP*, p. 73.

37) Kum J. T., *op. cit.*, p.39.

Seongho was very critical of the rigidly orthodox understanding of Neo-Confucianism and its empty conceptual discussions of the scholarly world. This was a general disposition amongst the Namins, with which Yi Byeok also identified. Seongho insisted that it would be better to stick to the 'Old Classical Books' (古經), though he conceded that it would be very difficult to bring the literati out of their dullness. He tried to defend this view by pointing out that it was Chu Hsi himself who said that when one is in little doubt, a little doubt emerges, but when in big doubt, greater intellectual inquiry will follow -- a point basically in accord with Cheng I who said that "a student must first of all learn to doubt."<sup>38)</sup>

While Seongho agreed with Toegye as regarding the supremacy of *i*, *principle*, over *gi*, material force, he seemed to have gone beyond the old master's dichotomy by concomitantly emphasising the supremacy of *gi*. As he stressed,

At different times, Mencius advocated Li-supremacy and Kao-tzu advocated *gi* [*ch'i*] supremacy. Because when something is created, Li and *gi* combine into one. So the Li-supremacy theory is valid and the *gi*-supremacy theory is valid.<sup>39)</sup>

The argument for the priority of *i* over *gi* was centred on the conception of function (作用), a notion Toegye articulated in his correspondence with Gi Dae-seung. When discussing the Four Beginnings (四端) he insisted that they were terms applied to the condition after the feelings arouse, but without *i* they could not be active.<sup>40)</sup> Substance and function, Seongho held, corresponded to *i* and *gi*, which could subsequently be spoken of as *do* (道) and *gi* (器), the 'vessel.' The relationship between them is one of order, primary and secondary, high and low. Hence, one could speak of the creation of Heaven and Earth by using the formula for both high and low (形而上下). The high sphere is comprised by *i* or *do*, and the

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38) *SBCP*, p. 570

39) Quoted in Choe, M. H., *op. cit.*, p. 157.

40) Lee, P. H., ed., *Sourcebook of Korean Civilization*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1993, p. 628.

lower sphere, which is the 'vessel' (*gi*), by material force.

But Seongho also emphasised the priority of material force, for it fills up the space between Heaven and Earth, a concept similar perhaps to Plato's *Receptacle*, if we are to assume that Becoming is to occur at all. Material force provides a home for all created things.<sup>41)</sup> His concept of an active and all-encompassing material energy is extremely elaborate and has an aesthetic quality. When *gi* condenses to create an object, it does so by a pure blossoming of *gi* which he poetically called *jeongyeong* (精英). Human beings are distinct from wild animals and other material things by the action of 'vital *gi*' or *gihyeol* (氣血). When *gi* blossoms in its purity and combines with *gihyeol*, the pure spirit -- *jeongsin* (情神) -- arises. Hence, humans are endowed with *jeongsin* which sets them apart in the created world.

Seongho did not ascribe a religious conception to the Great *Gi* (大氣) as a volitional Creator. It is, however, what makes the small *gi* (小氣), e.g., all individual existence, be filled with: the Great *Gi* is imparted by both animated and non-animated beings in a pantheistic way. Seongho affirmed that material force, being the 'small receptacle', will never disappear for it endures eternally through the cyclical process of formation, birth, and death.<sup>42)</sup> His rendering of the primacy of both principle and material force is similar to Hegel's philosophy of the spirit and matter. However, Seongho did not consider the relationship between them to be the sphere of action for the historical development of the Idea. While Hegel agreed that an immediate knowledge of God can be called forth by both reason and faith, based on the principle that lies in the spirit, Seongho only affirmed a principle which is inherently circumscribed to things and, as such, incapable of transcending matter.<sup>43)</sup> Material energy is the pure blossoming (氣之精英), and this is immediate knowing.

Seongho based his argument on the principle that truth should not be sought in the external world. Similar to Yun Jung, he privileged the concept of

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41) Plato, *Timæus* (52c), trans. by B. Jowett, Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co. Inc., 1949, p. 35.

42) For the full quotation in Chinese from Yi Ik's *Seongho Saseol Yuseon* (星湖僿說類選), vol. 1 (下) Seoul: Mungwang Seorim, 1929. See also, Choe, M. H., *op. cit.*, p.160, n. 238.

43) Hegel, G.W. F, *On Art, Religion, Philosophy*, New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1970, p. 167.

*seongsil*: sincerity of mind, knowledge concerning immediate reality and practical virtue start from the individual. This is in accord with Lao Tzu, for whom the Tao can only be tacitly known by the person who recognises what is veiled within himself (以此): the individual existence must be seen from the point of view of herself, and so on up to the level of the family, the community and the world.<sup>44)</sup> Truth, in the sage's mind, would appear to the inner self, just as when objects are reflected in a mirror or water. This idea Wang Yang Ming put forth, agreeing with Neo-Confucianism's "mystical conception of a sage":

The mind of the sage is like a clear mirror... a sage does a thing when the time comes. The only fear is that the mirror is not clear, not that it is incapable of reflecting a thing as it comes.<sup>45)</sup>

Seongho also contrasted the mind to a mirror or water, and even to a monkey which nevertheless lacks intellectual -- or spiritual -- comprehension (靈得). Since the mind more than passively reflects external circumstances or forms of life, it can be hardly compared with physical realities. It is endowed with intellectual comprehension and can therefore discriminate at a higher level than a monkey. A person is able to recognise a name, a face, or the shape of a pine tree because as soon as these images meet the eyes they are discerned intellectually and one attains cognition

Following Yu Hyeong-won, Seongho reinforced the concept of the people as the foundation for a just government, but he opposed Yu's suggestion for a public field system which still precluded the concept of private ownership which preserved the *yangban* monopoly of the land. Hence, Seongho proposed a revised version which he called a *Blueprint for a Balanced Cultivation of Fields* (均田制度). As a scholar deeply preoccupied with the people's welfare he strongly stressed the concept of love for the people (愛民). In the *Collected Essays* (星湖僿說類選) he formulated his Silhak philosophy, in which he described the dire social conditions of the country. Seongho's encounter with Seohak can only be understood from the

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44) Kwok, M H., et al, *Tao Te Ching: a new translation*, Rockport: Element, 1993, ch.1.

45) *IPL*, secs. 16, 21.



perspective of traditional Confucianism thought.<sup>46)</sup> Although he was much impressed by Western scientific knowledge, his criticisms were rather elliptic. It was An Jeong-bok, who would dwell on 'religious Seohak.'

Giulio Aleni's *Jikbang woegi* (職方外紀) broadened Seongho's view of the Western countries and cultures, and their extraordinary scholars who elaborated individual educational systems that rivaled, if not surpassed, China. A new awareness of national identity was keenly apprehended by An Jeong-bok who quoted Seongho's words in the *Dongsa Gangmok* (東史綱目):

As the history of *Dongguk* [東國, Korea] is hard to read, so is the history of China which makes reading even more abstract, as one relies on disparaging and fallacious sources. The *Dong-in* [東人, Korean] does not read his own history, and so he lets things go awry. Traditionally, there is nobody who seems aware of this.<sup>47)</sup>

Both Seongho and An deplored the misgivings that permeated Joseon's historical consciousness. Even if people were born in the kingdom, Seongho maintained, they would simply disregard national history. He maintained that one should be awakened to the fact that the history of Joseon was the kingdom's very history (東國自東國), and not a systematic amalgam of Chinese chronicles. He deplored the fact that his countrymen would read and be conversant with Chinese history in detriment to their own national history.

As a result, Seongho thought that *gwago*, the civil examination, should also include topics pertinent to Joseon's history, rather than to China's old dynasties, so as to emphasise historical education and national awareness. These were very important issues that Seohak -- minus its strong religious overtones -- stirred up in Seongho's spirit and scholarship. But within the tradition in which he tried to found a new outlook on life, there was a concerted effort to investigate and deepen the knowledge of Seohak in its religious expression, Cheonjuhak. The emergence of a religious-minded group of Namin seonbis was bitterly contested by An Jeong-bok,

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46) Han, W. K., *Joseon Sidae Sasangsa Yeongu Nongo* ('Studies on Joseon Dynasty Historical Thought'), Seoul: Iljogak, 1996, p. 212.

47) Ibid., vol. 26, letter to An Jeong-bok, 答安百順 (1756, 丙子).



Seongho's outstanding disciple.

c. *An Jeong-bok (1712-1791)*<sup>48)</sup>

It will be recalled that the introduction of Western religious literature entered the country during the reign of King Sunjo (r. 1568-1608). The works produced by the Jesuits were brought in by the Joseon emissaries to Beijing, but it was not until 1723 and 1724 that young men of talent started to investigate them more systematically.<sup>49)</sup> Religiously speaking, God (*Hanulnim*) and his 'providential actions' in the created world became the focus for a number of Namin scholars.

Sunam first sought to investigate how Cheonjuhak related to Buddhism, as he maintained that one could generally argue that there were three distinct forms of religious worship, and distinct countries embracing them. If China favoured Confucianism, there were nations beyond China's borders which thought highly of Cheonjuhak; some promoted Buddhism, and yet others pyrolatry.

In 1746 Sunam became a student under Seongho, who instructed him on general philosophy, Western science and some Cheonjuhak concepts. Sunam became convinced, however, that the Westerners were strange people who, despite their scientific knowledge and religious proclivities, could not match China's philosophical traditions. It was by no mistake, he held, that the Chinese thought the Western missionaries were Buddhism monks, and rightly kept Confucianism philosophy at the centre of their socio-political worldview. Even if one hundred generations passed, Sunam argued, Cheonjuhak would never be able to match Yao's teaching.

It was in his late forties that Sunam discussed Seohak with his Namin master. He was attracted or rather puzzled by some of its claims, although his interest was eminently academic. In a letter addressed to Seongho in 1757 Sunam criticised Matteo Ricci's *TMLH* and the *Ten Paradoxes of a Strange Person* (畸人十篇). He disparaged the doctrine of Heaven and Hell and questioned Seongho

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48) An Jeong-bok's *nom de plume* is Sunam, to which we will refer hereinafter.

49) An J. B., 'Research on the Heavenly Teaching', Cheonhakko (天學考), *Sunamjip* (順菴集), vol. 17, photocopy.

on the priority of *gi* over *i* by pointing out that in the *TMLH* it was said that if there were no things, there could be no principle:<sup>50)</sup>

Confucianism is characterized by its emphasis on self-cultivation [修己養性], the advancement of goodness and rejection of evil [行善去惡]. This is what is called proper conduct [所當爲]. When one dies, there are no blessings awaiting in the hereafter. But [for Cheonjuhak] self-cultivation [修身] is for the sake of the judgement of Heaven above [天臺]. This is in stark contrast with our Confucian tradition.<sup>51)</sup>

A year later Sunam was still questioning Seongho's position on other issues, as for example the doctrine of the spirits in which he took particular interest.

Previously, there had been similar criticisms, particularly by Sin Hu-dam who had condemned Simbiasi's work *Ling yan luoshao* (靈言蠡勺) as unsubstantiated ravings, as the Jesuit father condemned Confucianism's theory of the condensation and dispersion of material force (氣之聚散). As Sunam more fully grasped the nature of Cheonjuhak he also likened it to Buddhism. From the point of view of its doctrines he regarded Catholic teaching as an absurdity, for it threatened the cohesion and political orientation of the country in general and the Namins in particular.<sup>52)</sup> He believed that Confucianism excelled in the ethical system of relationships, marked by self-cultivation, sincerity before Heaven and the issuance of the heavenly mandate. If in the Chinese Classics self-cultivation implied knowledge rooted in sincerity, Cheonjuhak misapprehended the true Mandate of Heaven and by so doing, did not teach the true way (眞道), Sunam claimed.

From the point of view of Confucianism, Sunam concurred that what Ricci called Sangje was in fact synonymous with the Great Absolute and Principle, which, as tradition teaches, cannot be heard or smelled. As absolute concepts, they are identical to one another, and do not constitute volitional and commanding conceptions of actuality.<sup>53)</sup>

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50) *TMLH*, p. 111.

51) An J B., *Sunamjip* (順菴集), vol.2, 16a-17a (上), 'An Annexed Letter to Master Seongho' [星湖先生別紙] (1757), Seoul: Seonggyun University, Daedong Munhwa Yeongu, vol. II, 19b, n.p.

52) An, J.B., *op. cit.*, vol 6, 29b-35-b.

Ricci, we noted, only briefly touched upon the person of Jesus in his *TMLH*, but there seems to be little doubt that the greatest difficulty was the identification of Heaven with the Nazarene, and thus, the question of incarnation, the trinity and the crucifixion of the so-called Lord of Heaven.<sup>54)</sup> How could these questions be accommodated within Confucianism's interpretation of Heaven and Sangje? Sunam argued that there was simply no place for them, for if the Lord of Heaven had in fact lived for thirty three years on earth and then returned to Heaven, during that time there was no Sangje in the heavenly sphere. If Jesus represented the crucified Lord of Heaven, his crucifixion would by itself mean an ignoble event which entirely robbed him of dignity.<sup>55)</sup> Jesus' works and wonders, similar to Buddhism, pointed to divine interventions (顯聖顯靈之類), as the incarnation and all miracles were by themselves supernatural events and as such, heretical.

Sunam's criticism of Cheonjuhak were consonant with Seongho, if only more forceful. Unlike his master, however, he was less inclined to apprehend or give weight to the scientific aspect of Western teaching and let the religious claims go unchallenged. It was with this in mind that he turned to orthodoxy and focused on the doctrine of the soul and the notion of Heaven and Hell, as we will note in the 'Question-Answer' summary Sunam wrote, below. These issues were naturally related to Cheonjuhak's great claim: the Lord of Heaven and the spiritual realm of eternal blessings and punishments. Sunam distinguished between heavenly spirits (天之神), 'dead' human spirits (人死之鬼神) and kindred spirits (百物之神). He was naturally interested in the second kind of spirits, to which he compared the views of

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53) An J. B., *Cheonhakmunjp* (天學文集), Seoul: Yeogang Chulpansa, 4 vols., 21b-22a, 24a.b.. Ricci, however, suggested that since one cannot refer to Principle, or the Great Absolute or *Sangje* as identical entities -- for they are not substance -- it follows that they cannot be the source of Creation. This position revealed the main epistemological divergence between Cheonjuhak and Confucianism, Sunam argued.

54) A more detailed explanation about Yaso was to be found in other Jesuit texts composed after or shortly before Ricci's death, like Chavagnac's *Zhendao Zizheng* (真道自證), and de Mailla's *Les Evangiles des dimanches et fêtes de l'année*, revised by M. l'abbe Delaunay, Paris: L. Curmer, 1864.

55) An J. B., *Cheonhakmunjp*, 18a, 18b.

Confucianism, Buddhism and Cheonjuhak.

According to Confucianism, when material force condenses things are created, and when it dissipates death overtakes them and there is an inexorable return to emptiness. Buddhism teaches that when a person dies, his or her spirit survives to incarnate once more. Samsara, therefore, is not overcome. Cheonjuhak claims that when material force condenses, human beings are created; immediately after generation the soul comes into existence and never faces dissipation even after the death of the body. The soul is the great realm of existence.<sup>56)</sup> It was in his *Collected Works* (順庵集) that Sunam offered an orthodox criticism of Ricci's three-tired classification of soul into vegetative (生魂) sentient (覺魂) and intellectual (靈魂).<sup>57)</sup>

By claiming that Ricci's classification was similar to Hsün Tzu's concepts of vegetative life (草木之生), animal perception (禽獸之知) and human propriety (人間之義), Sunam must have also been aware that Hsün had advocated the concept of triads similar to Catholic trinity: Heaven has its seasons, Earth has its wealth, and man his government. This is how, he said, they are able to form a triad.<sup>58)</sup> In view of the naturalistic approach notwithstanding, this was a reasonable argument and Sunam fully endorsed it. On the concept of establishing a triad, however, a similar paradigmatic idea is expressed by the person of sincerity (*seong-in*) who can develop her nature and ultimately form a trinity with Heaven and Earth, as it is written in the *Doctrine of the Mean*.<sup>59)</sup> However, the behaviour of the Confucian sage, warned Sunam, is limited to the present world and it has nothing to do with Jesus' doctrine of Heaven and Hell in the world-to-be. In light

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56) An J. B., *Sunamjip*, vol 2, 26b.

57) *TMLH*, pp. 145, 163, 195.

58) *SBCP*, p. 117. But as Dasan would later discuss, Hsün Tzu was right to claim that everything shared a common material energy, despite the differences between them. Hsün Tzu, Dasan argued, was right to say that water and fire have *gi*, but no life; plants have life but no perception; the birds and animals have perception but no moral rules or social organisation. Humankind, however, has not only *gi*, but life, perception and propriety. See, Jeong Dasan, *Yeoyudang Jeonjip* (與猶堂全集), vol. I, Seoul: Yogang Press, 1989, p. 363.

59) *SBCP*, 'Doctrine of the Mean', ch. 22.

of Cheonjuhak's heretical claims, it became necessary to reinforce the saying, "promote virtue, reject evil", in order to foster bright virtue and safeguard public order. Reminiscent of Yi Byeok's passage in the *EST*, Sunam vigorously stressed that those who promote virtue in order to gain Heaven, or pray to receive blessings after death do so out of self-interest, a practice alien to self-cultivation, and self-expenditure.<sup>60)</sup> The notion that one behaves so as to make a profit is anathema in Confucianism. This is succinctly phrased by the Chinese scholar in Ricci's work: "A superior man is not concerned to do good in order to win benefits in this life and to steer clear of worldly loss. How, then, can the question of gain and loss in the next life be worth discussing"?<sup>61)</sup> One might add, they will end up in "a whirl of emptiness."<sup>62)</sup>

Ultimately, it would be a contradiction to posit a benevolent Sangje, Sunam argued, and at the same time affirm the idea of Heaven and Hell. If the soul does not dissipate, then how to explain the unlimited increase of the human race and the seemingly limited dimensions of Heaven and Hell? Cheonjuhak was an absurdity, and the belief in Heaven and Hell in a world after death was something the seonbi could not rationally advocate, for he ought to cultivate his moral character in the present world.<sup>63)</sup>

Sunam supported his criticisms of Cheonjuhak by referring to the Chinese Classics. He wrote that in the Classics we have to "simply follow the norm which Sangje -- the Lord on High -- established when he endowed humankind with a fair nature and let it descend in the world."<sup>64)</sup> He also stressed the oft quoted sentence from the *Book of Odes*: King Wen attends Sangje with a respectful attitude, and one ought to fear the Mandate of Heaven.<sup>65)</sup> This last sentence was

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60) An, J. B., *Cheonhakmunjip* 24 a-b.

61) *TMLH*, pp. 309, 317.

62) See the following chapter, *Essence of Sage Teaching*, a.8.

63) An J. B., *Sunamjip*, vol. 6, 32b. (與權既明書), (1784), n.p.

64) *Ibid.*, v.17, 8a.

65) Legge, J., *The Chinese Classics*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960, IV, p. 433.

emphasised by Confucius, who taught that the Mandate of Heaven was fearsome (畏天命).<sup>66)</sup> Sunam argued that Tzu tsai considered that human nature (性) is in fact the Mandate of Heaven, whereas for Mencius the will of Heaven consisted in cultivating moral nature (心性). Sunam was adamant that there was nothing a seonbi could learn other than from the Classics, and he reinforced Tung Tzu's argument according to which the origin of Tao immediately proceeds from Heaven.<sup>67)</sup> The will of Heaven, he maintained, was known in China. Quoting Mo Tzu, "the most religious of ancient Chinese philosophers",<sup>68)</sup> Sunam observed that,

Those who obey the will of Heaven love universally and benefit each other, and will surely obtain rewards. Those who oppose the will of Heaven set themselves apart from each other, hate each other, and injure each other, and will surely incur punishment."<sup>69)</sup>

Practically this meant that the ancient sage-kings of the Three Dynasties -- Yü, T'ang, Wen and Wu -- obeyed the will of Heaven and were rewarded. The so-called wicked kings -- Chieh, Chou, Yu and Li -- opposed it and were punished. Mo Tzu's doctrine of universal love and mutual benefit, as Sunam went on to argue, sprang from his convoluted conception of Heaven and what was "beneficial to Heaven on the highest level, beneficial to spiritual beings on the middle level, and beneficial to man on the lower level."<sup>70)</sup>

This led him to conclude that one could scarcely distinguish Mo Tzu's conception of universal love from Cheonjuhak axiom, "love thy enemy."<sup>71)</sup> The same

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66) Ibid., v.17, 8a.

67) Ibid. The sentence reads in Chinese: "董子 所謂, 道之大原, 出乎天."

68) *SBCP*, p. 221.

69) Ibid., v.17, 8a. For an English translation of Mo Tzu's (480-390 BCE) work, see Mo Ti, *Ethical and Political Works of Motse*, New York: Hyperion Press, 1973. For a contrastive reading, see also Mei, Y. P., *Motse, the Neglected Rival of Confucius*, New York: Hyperion Press, 1976.

70) *SBCP*, p. 220.

71) An, J. B., *op. cit.*



could be said of Mo Tzu's idea of asceticism which Sunam compared to Cheonjuhak's maxim: "Treat the body sparingly and overcome its debilities."<sup>72)</sup> Although Sunam rejected both systems of thought he went on to criticise Cheonjuhak -- Cheonjugyo (天主教), as Catholicism became known -- as even more grotesque a precept than Mo Tzu's doctrine:

Those who believe in Cheonjugyo explain Heaven in terms of after-death, but Mo Tzu's explanation seems concerned with the present moment. Truly, Cheonjugyo is more grotesque than Mo Tzu.<sup>73)</sup>

Sunam was convinced that the Western emphasis on the after-death was merely a ramification of Buddhism's dogmatic credo. The seonbi should not embrace such an odd doctrine, for one should heed Confucianism's Way and discard all other heretical thoughts, i.e., Buddhism and Cheonjuhak's notions of Heaven and Hell, as well as Mo Tzu's doctrine of universal love.<sup>74)</sup>

In the *Question-Answer* summary below, Sunam sketchily compared Chou Yon's understanding of Heaven (天學) during the Qing dynasty with the Joseon scholar Ho Gyun. Arguing that the former had no parameter to be judged in a meaningful way, Sunam emphasised the immediate knowledge of heaven, the globe and the heliocentric theory, rather than Heaven as one's natural disposition. As for Ho, Sunam viewed him with contempt because even in the mourning period Ho allowed himself to go to his private chambers to "make a child".<sup>75)</sup> Although Ho feared the people, he kept eating meat -- which was strictly forbidden during the mourning period -- and so he went to the mountains as if to read Buddhism scriptures. To this An added that Ho's notion of one's natural disposition (天性) was equivalent to lust. By violating the mourning period it would imply that "the sage teaching meant only compulsion."<sup>76)</sup> Comparatively speaking, Cheonjugyo was

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72) Ibid.

73) Ibid.

74) Ibid.

75) According to Confucius, "Mourning is to be carried to the utmost degree of grief." (*Analects* 19:14).



rational and less frivolous than Ho's rendering of natural disposition, as this could be seen from the "true doctrine" the disciples of Cheonjugyo espoused.<sup>77)</sup>

Lao Tzu, the Buddha, Mo Tzu and Wang Yang Ming, according to Sunam, set forth the Sacred (神聖) and called it Voidness (虛無), Nirvana (寂滅), the Fatherless (無父) and the Kingless (無君), respectively. Given the more obturate nature of Korean Confucianism which historically followed the Cheng-Chu interpretation to levels unmatched even in China, Wang Yang Ming's reinterpretation of Confucianism was naturally deemed an heresy by Sunam. Wang's innate knowledge of the good (良知之學) seemed thoroughly incompatible with traditional Confucianism, and more similar to Catholic teaching. In short, there was no way to compare the traditional Confucianism scholarship originated in China with the absurdities espoused by those who adhered to Yaso's teaching. Sunam found it very hard to accept the fact that roughly 3600 books had been already written about Jesus or the prophecies regarding Cheonjugyo. The books produced in China were the indisputable source of ethical behaviour for the Chinese, and could not be matched by the Jesuit literature.<sup>78)</sup>

Sunam promptly dismissed the transcendental notion of Heaven in Cheonjugyo, but realised that in the East the traditional teachings (教, *gyo*), or the Three *Gyos* (三教), approached the concept of Heaven rather ambiguously. That is why the Jesuits were able to equate the Confucian concept of 'knowledge of Heaven', -- *cheonhak* (天學) -- with the teaching of the Lord of Heaven, *Cheonjugyo* (天主教). Sunam was also critical of the 'established religions.'<sup>79)</sup> As a Western teaching, Buddhism sought to annihilate reasoning; Taoism was a external doctrine bearing no connection to public morals. Confucianism, on the other hand,

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76) An, J. B., *op. cit.*

77) *Ibid.*

78) *Ibid.*, v.17, 20a.

79) The term "religion" (宗教) did not appear until modern times. Hence, the pictograph 教, literally meaning "teaching" or "leading precept", has been taken as such in the present work, as Ricci himself referred to it in the *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven* as "true teaching" (眞教). See *TMLH*, p. 69.

attached weight to ethical code and public morals. But Cheonjugyo taught, Sunam reasoned, that *Cheonju* (天主) -- the Lord of Heaven -- reigns over all things.<sup>80)</sup> In other words, those who supported Cheonjugyo made use of the Classics to explain that "God created Heaven and Earth, and let Adam and Eve, the two human ancestors, come to this world."<sup>81)</sup>

Indeed, according to Ricci's *TMLH*, in the beginning of Creation human beings were happy and free from diseases, as they enjoyed health and harmony together with Sangje.<sup>82)</sup> All the animals in creation also enjoyed the same happy endowment. But human beings violated the mandate of the Lord of Heaven, the result of which allowed suffering in world. Nevertheless, the human descendants have retained the memory of this unfortunate past.<sup>83)</sup>

In the booklet entitled *True Way for Self-Enlightenment* (眞道自證) written by the Jesuit Chavagnac, Sunam, perhaps following Ricci's discussion that human nature is fundamentally good, observed that the Lord of Heaven is the original ancestor and established the human ancestors by endowing them with good nature (性善).<sup>84)</sup> Because this is the principle, all living beings in Heaven and on earth follow the mandate of the Lord of Heaven.<sup>85)</sup> Consequently it is not clear, concluded Sunam, whether God is in Himself a human being or Nature itself. Since God gave birth to Adam and Eve one may conclude that He is the ancestor of humankind. The more debatable argument, was to be found in the *TMLH* as an old Biblical aphorism: "Reward for good and evil does not lie on the person alone but extends to one's descendents."<sup>86)</sup> Sunam thought that this did not exactly apply to human beings per se, because Cheonjugyo would primarily emphasise the original and

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80) An, J.B., *op. cit.*, vol. 17, 9b.

81) *Ibid.*, v. 17, 16a.

82) *TMLH*, p. 263.

83) An J. B., *op. cit.*, vol. 17, 17a.

84) *TMLH*, Chapter 7, pp. 347-407

85) An J. B., *op. cit.*, vol. 17, 17a.

86) *Ibid.*, 17b. *TMLH*, p. 321. For biblical references, see Ez. 18:2, Jer. 31:29.

returning ancestors, e.g., Adam as the original ancestor and Jesus, the Lord of Heaven, as the returning ancestor.

In the *TMLH* it is said that Adam suffered and his descendents committed ignominious sins. Historically, many people knew nothing of the way of the sage, and very few sought it. Thus, the Lord of Heaven -- Jesus -- had to descend from Heaven in the second year of the reign of the Han emperor Yuan Shou (漢哀帝 元壽) After thirty three years, he would have ascended back to Heaven: hence, one is dealing with a god and not a human being -- a symbol -- Sunam concluded.<sup>87)</sup> In his words, an individual came as the Lord of Heaven -- "Jesus as the returning ancestor who practiced virtue, and whose spirit survived the corruption of the body."<sup>88)</sup> On earth one would follow the paradigm of good and evil, and thus know "whether he has engaged in self-reflection during his lifetime"<sup>89)</sup>, and after death, would be rewarded either Heaven or Hell.

Belief in the Lord of Heaven meant repudiating the physical senses, the secular world and evil spirits.<sup>90)</sup> This, in Sunam's view, was absurd: the world represented by the Lord of Heaven was a ludicrous folly, as it embodied the world-to-come, and not the classical interrelatedness of Heaven and Earth:

The material energies Yin and Yang united with each other to create all things, as soon as Heaven and Earth were established. The limpid energy generated the people; the turbid energy generated plants and animals.<sup>91)</sup>

In other words, Yin and Yang constitute the foundation for all things created, and human beings are within the realm of creation which must not be neglected, or transcended. That is why one can revere one's ancestors, Sunam explained. But the

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87) An, J. B., *op. cit.*, vol. 17, 18a.

88) *Ibid.*, vol. 17, 14a.

89) *TMLH*, pp. 339-341.

90) An J. B., *op. cit.*, vol 17, 15 a b.

91) *Ibid.*, 16a, b.

doctrine of the Lord of Heaven would discount the sacrifice to Confucius: "As one attends to the ghosts and invites them to eat the sacrificial meal, shall the spirit of Confucius be left unattended? All human sacrifices follow the same pattern."<sup>92)</sup> Given Yin-Yang's immediate reality one should undoubtedly revere the ancestors, as the Book of Odes teaches:

Ever think of your ancestor,  
Cultivating your virtue,  
Always striving to accord with the [Mandate of Heaven].<sup>93)</sup>

Hence, Sunam was very critical of Matteo Ricci's disingenuous references to Confucius, who, according to the Jesuit father, was at once both a 'source' of old-revered traditions but not a figure of reverence.

Below, the *Questions and Answers* were addressed by Sunam so as to purportedly dissuade the Namin *seonbi* from obscuring the traditional scholarship refined by Toegye and continued with Yi Ik. However, many Namins had already deviated from the orthodox *Cheonhak* to enter, *Cheonjuhak* -- the knowledge of the Lord of Heaven.<sup>94)</sup>

#### IV. Sunam's Questions and Answers

1. **Q:** *Did Cheonhak (天學) -- Knowledge of Heaven -- also exist in the past?*  
**A:** It did. Human nature (性品) was conferred to humankind by Heaven, and one ought to preserve it (書經). King Wen faithfully served Heaven (詩經). Confucius said, "The Heavenly Mandate [天命] is awesome." Tzu Tsai (子思), "Heaven's mandate is human nature." Mencius, "By cultivating the mind one is fostering one's nature, which means serving Heaven." Tung Tzu (董子), "The

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92) Ibid., 24 b.

93) Legge, J. *The She King*, bk. I, ode I, 6, p. 431.

94) All questions and answers provided by Sunam is a discussion of *Cheonjuhak* (天主學) -- or Catholic doctrine -- written in the volume entitled *Cheonhakko* (天學考) which appears in the Complete Works of Sunam (*Sunam Jeonjip*). The specific volume will appear in parenthesis, with the corresponding section. Bibliographical references will appear *italicised* in Chinese, except for biographical names, concepts or general paraphrases as these were coined by Sunam.

origin of Tao proceeds from Heaven." (v. 17, 8.a)

2. **Q:** *Why Seohak (西學) should be rejected?*

**A:** Although it does revere Heaven, Cheonjuhak is an evil way (邪道). (v. 18, 8.b)

3. **Q:** *What is the reason for not considering Seohak a 'sagely doctrine' (聖學)?*

**A:** As in the above question, Seohak reveres Heaven but it is an evil doctrine. (v. 17, 9.a)

4. **Q:** *What is the meaning of "Heaven" according to Cheonjuhak (天主學)?*

**A:** It is a simulacrum for what it considers as an elevated view, but it does not compare with other teachings (他教). (v. 17, 9.a)

5. **Q:** *Are there other people who talk of Heaven similarly to the way those who have accepted Cheonjugyo do?*

**A:** According to Cheonjugyo those who observe the will of Heaven (天意) and love one another as God loves the world (兼愛交利說) will be rewarded, and those who disobey and do people harm will be punished as in Mo Tzu's doctrine of universal love (墨子天志篇).<sup>95)</sup> Mo Tzu's heaven is concerned with the present world, whereas the heaven of those who have embraced Cheonjugyo leads to the world of the future. If compared to the former, the latter is truly false and germane to Buddhism. (v.17, 10.a)

6. **Q:** *Yaso means the savior of the world. What is the difference vis-à-vis the Confucian sage?*

**A:** The salvation offered by Yaso implies Heaven (天堂) and Hell (地獄) in the world-to-come, whereas the sage's way (聖人行道), as Cheng Tzu wrote, entails brilliant virtue (明德) and the instruction of the people in the present world. In Buddhism the transcending of Samsara is sought for the sake of one's own benefit, and it is similar to Cheonjuhak's rendering of Hell. (v.17, 10.b)

7. **Q:** *Chou Yon (鄒衍) referred to Cheonhak in China, and now in Joseon (King Yonjo 2nd. year) Ho Gyun (許筠) also does the same. What are they referring to?*

**A:** Chou Yon's conception is largely nonsensical (滉洋難測) as compared to the conception of Heaven espoused by those who believe in Cheonjugyo. And his view of the world is less convincing. Ho Gyun's theory that Heaven lies in the libidinal desire between the sexes is less credible than Cheonjugyo's. (v.17, 11.a)

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95) Mo Tzu's teaching, with its emphasis on universal love, represented the greatest challenge to Confucianism. Ricci mentioned Mo Tzu as he discussed spiritual beings and the human soul. See *TMLH*, p. 233.

8. **Q:** *What is the difference between Cheonjugyo and Confucianism's theory of good and evil (善惡論)?*  
**A:** Cheonjugyo sincerely reveres Sangje (上帝), the Lord on High and thus concurs with the main Confucian texts. Since it proscribes carnal lust and emphasises the control of one's appetite, Cheonjugyo is similar to Confucianism's notion of self-cultivation (克己). The only difference is that the Good in Cheonjugyo refers to the World-to-Come, whereas Confucianism focuses on the present world. (v.17, 12.a,b)
9. **Q:** *What is the difference between the doctrines of the present and the world-to-come?*  
**A:** The present world is the one in which the present generation lives (Confucianism); and the World-to-Come refers to the sphere which will open up after death, the realm of the spirits (Cheonjugyo). (v.17, 12.b)
10. **Q:** *Are the spirits deathless (不死)?*  
**A:** Confucius taught that we cannot know even the living, so how could one know about the spirits? The Confucianism sage does not speak of ghosts (怪神). (v.17, 13.a).
11. **Q:** *What is the reason for rejecting Cheonjugyo?*  
**A:** Cheonjugyo's sympathisers think that it is improper to think of life limited to the present world. But the vital energies Ying and Yang move up and down and combine (交媾) with each other to create all things. Human beings have appeared in-between Heaven and Earth. (v.17, 14.b)
12. **Q:** *Should we recognise Cheonjugyo's doctrine of the three vices (三仇說), i. e., sensuality, secularism and the spirits?*  
**A:** Given the body, sensual imperativeness should be curbed. This, in Confucianism, is known as proper conduct (直己). Given the vicissitudes of life, one should reflect on how people can enjoy wealth and position, but also know poverty, destitution and indigence; or else, in social intercourse, make a profit or loss. This, in Confucianism, is called self-examination (克治). Given the spirits (魔鬼) all that is relevant is the desire dwelling in form and material energy. One cannot honour the spirits per se. (v.17, 15.a,b)
13. **Q:** *Is it true that God created Heaven and Earth, and that Adam (亞當) and Eve (厄娃) were created as the ancestors of humankind?*  
**A:** As soon as Heaven and Earth were created, the two material forces, Yin and Yang, combined thus giving birth to all things. The limpid energy (氣) gave birth to human beings, while the turbid one, to animals and plants. That's all. (v. 17, 16.a,b)

14. **Q:** *What can we make of the concepts "original ancestor" (原祖) and "returned ancestor" (再祖)?*  
**A:** According to Cheonjugo, 'original ancestor' refers to Adam, and 'returned ancestor', to Yaso (Jesus, 耶蘇). The Lord of Heaven (天主) gave birth to the original ancestor and set up the returned ancestor in a self-evident way (眞道 自證). However, Adam brought misery to himself, and the Lord of Heaven, out of compassion, let Yaso descend to the world. This is what Matteo Ricci wrote in the *TMLH*. Yaso was born from a virgin during the Han dynasty. According to the *Seonggyeong* (聖經, Bible), Ancestral Heaven (天祖) set a person as the returned ancestor amongst the descendents of the original ancestor. However, the Lord of Heaven himself descended as a child in the person of Yaso, and this is a blatant contradiction. (v.17, 17.a.b)
15. **Q:** *Therefore, the Seonggyeong is completely groundless?*  
**A:** It is a fact that absurd yarns have surfaced since immemorial antiquity. However, in the East whenever a sage appeared he gradually formulated abstruse dogmas. However, it is said that only the Bible is free from nonsense, and so it is not different from the Buddha's doctrine according to which people depart from and return to this world as reincarnated spirits. (v.17, 18.b)
16. **Q:** *Then did the Buddha assimilate Cheonjugo so as to establish his own doctrine?*  
**A:** The Buddha (釋迦) was born during the reign of the Chou King Zhao (周昭王), and Yaso, during the Han emperor Ai (漢哀帝), so one cannot say that. (v.17, 20.a)
17. **Q:** *Can one believe in the historical Yaso?*  
**A:** No. Because all prophecies concerning Yaso were recorded as such in the books of Western history
18. **Q:** *In order to 'enter religion' (行教) one should be unafraid of sharks or wolves. Isn't this beyond the power of human beings?*  
**A:** Some Buddhist [unreasonable] truth claims have originated in the West. crossed the ocean and were introduced in the East, in what was a very long path. (v.17, 20.b)
19. **Q:** *On the cross Yaso did not become offended by those who nailed him down. Is not this a sign of absolute benevolence (至仁)?*  
**A:** There are two kinds of evil: the ones confronting parents and country, and those one suffers. It is natural that one would not avenge personal evil, but it is a grave error -- more than the Mo Tzu's doctrine of universal love -- if the evil committed to parents and the country be tolerated. (v.17, 21.b)



20. **Q:** *What is the difference between Cheonjugyo's rendering of "Heaven", and Confucianism's interpretation?*  
**A:** According to Cheonjugyo, God is the creator of all things (萬物總主). According to Confucianism, Heaven is also recognised as such, but it has two further meanings: vital energy (形氣) and rational principle (理致). The heaven of vital energy is manifest in Cheonjugyo. Confucius referred to rational principle by saying that the "Great Absolute created Heaven and Earth; Yin and Yang are the two vital energies, the Tao." In other words, this is equivalent to rational principle, which Cheonjugyo lacks. (v.17, 21.b)
21. **Q:** *Matteo Ricci's TMLH and The Paradox of a Strange Person (畸人十篇) were read by Chinese literati who believed in Cheonjugyo. Is this true?*  
**A:** Those who believed in Cheonjugyo wrote groundless theories, so one cannot dwell much on them. (v. 17, 22.b)
22. **Q:** *Is the denomination "Lord on Heaven"(天主) to be found in the Chinese records?*  
**A:** In the volume *On Sacrifices* (封禪書) in the *Book of History*<sup>96)</sup> a memorial service to eight gods is mentioned. The first god mentioned is the lord of heaven. In the *Annals of the Han Dynasty* (漢書), a volume entitled *Huoqu bingchuan* (霍去病傳) it is said that King Xiutu (休屠王) worshipped heaven by making a golden image, which essentially is a Buddhism practice. According to Chavagnac's [沙字信] *True Way for Self-Enlightenment* (*Zhendao Zizheng* 真道自證) the holy mother is embracing Yaso and adoring the Lord on Heaven, but the denomination "Lord of Heaven" precedes the Han emperor Aiti (哀帝). It is easy to see that the expression "Lord of Heaven", as it appears in the Chinese texts, is not a reference to Yaso. (v.17, 22.b), (v.17, 23.a)
23. **Q:** *Does not Confucius say, in the book Lie Tzu (列子), that the sage is equivalent to the Lord of Heaven?*  
**A:** That was an expression in praise of King Yao (堯). (v.17, 23.b)
24. **Q:** *Why are there new names for the rituals performed in Cheonjugyo?*  
**A:** These are mere offices and rites similar in nature to Buddhism, e.g., the Cheonjugyo priest, the Lord of Heaven, the Trinity, holy water, and confession are similar to Buddhism's known practices. In Confucianism such rituals are not performed. (v.17, 23.b)

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96) The *Shu King*, or *Book of History*, may be the earliest extant classical text produced in China. It is a compilation of events which took place between 2357 and 627 BCE. Confucius considered it essential to the virtuous education of the scholar, along with the *I Ching* and the *Book of Rites* (*Analects*, 7:27).

25. **Q:** *The spirit (生魂) and spiritual awareness proceed from human nature (質), but not the soul (靈魂). Is it a fact that the soul (靈魂) does not disappear after death?*
- A:** Water and fire have vital energy (氣), but not life (生). Plants have life, but not intelligence (知). Animals have intelligence, but not spiritual perception regarding propriety (義). Human beings have vital energy, life and spiritual awareness. This is in accord with Shun Tzu (荀子). However, [Ricci's] theory about the immortality of the soul (靈魂不滅說) is only relevant to Buddhism and foreign to Confucianism. (v.17, 24.a)
26. **Q:** *Is it true that ghosts would consume the food prepared for a memorial service (祭祀)?*
- A:** In Cheonjugyo there is no difference between ghosts and the image of the Lord of Heaven (v. 17, 24.b)
27. **Q:** *What are ghosts?*
- A:** The supreme evil spirit (鉅神) opposed the Lord of Heaven and was thrown to Hell, and this created a legion of ghosts. The Lord of Heaven, on the other hand, used this opportunity as a training course for the sake of good-hearted people (善人) (v. 17, 24.b).

From the summary above, Sunam understood the expression "knowledge of Heaven" (天學), which he emphasised, and the teaching of the Lord of Heaven (天主學), according to traditional Confucianism -- and these were views mutually incompatible. He was ready to point out that both in the *Book of History*, and in the *Book of Odes* as we quoted above, "knowledge of Heaven" means that Sangje endowed the people with a constant nature which ought to be cultivated. Indeed, in the *Book of Odes* one reads that King Wen further cultivated his virtue by attending Sangje with a heart of circumspection and reverence:

Profound was king [Wen];

Oh! continuous and bright was his feeling of reverence.<sup>97)</sup>

Confucius, however, taught that in fearing the Mandate of Heaven everything would

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97) Legge, J., *The She King*, bk. I, ode I, 4, p. 429.

conform to the proper state of things. Chu Hsi likened Heaven with principle (天即理), a point in accord with Confucius' reference to the Great Absolute which gave birth to the complementary 'forces' of heaven and earth, Yin and Yang (兩儀). The emphasis was on natural phenomena, for Heaven does not hear, nor smell. Hence any attempt at self-cultivation or 'salvation', as Sunam suggested, would have to do with the natural realm of Yin and Yang. Nevertheless, the concept of Heaven also lent itself to the interpretation the Jesuits advanced, i.e., a personal, self-willed Lord of Heaven, similar to Sangje -- a reading Sunam rejected.

Therefore, by "knowledge of Heaven", as this appeared in traditional sources, one meant not a Catholic Heaven, but the naturalistic interplay between the material forces of Yin and Yang. Sunam conceded that if Catholic Heaven could be said to possess material form (形氣), it was not endowed with the complementarity of both form and rationality (理致) whose import, from the perspective of Confucianism, the expression "knowledge of heaven" most adequately conveyed. Furthermore, Sunam believed that Buddhism informed Cheonjugyo and constituted its roots. This could be seen in the redemptional role played by Jesus and similar Bodhisattvas vis-à-vis Heaven and Hell.

In sum, the Confucian emphasis on sagely self-cultivation and the present world (現世) had little or nothing to do with an otherly-world rapport which was paradigmatic of the Teaching of the Lord of Heaven, as Ricci termed it.

#### V. Dasan (1762-1836)

Jeong Yak-yong, or Dasan, was one of the most celebrated Silhak scholars in the latter period of the Joseon dynasty. From childhood he studied the Chinese Classics, history and literature. As an adolescent he came across the work of Yi Ik and became deeply impressed by Silhak. The more consistent encounter with Seohak and Cheonjuhak took place when he was twenty three years old, as he read the Jesuit books on astronomy, mathematics, Western customs and religious thought. It might be then that Dasan realised the sterile nature of the ongoing scholarly debate, and thus turned his attention to the acquisition of more information on Western knowledge and its contrasting techniques. Eventually he

would also receive baptism.

By the time King Jeongjo ascended the throne, the Noron faction had consolidated its hold on power and deposed the Namins. The king, however, favoured Dasan, a Namin himself, who created a number of enemies by trying to expose the corrupt mentality and practices of the times. In the reign of King Sunjo (r. 1800-1834) in the 'purge of scholars' (士禍) deemed heretical by the government, the Namins were accused of promoting Cheonjuhak. Dasan was arrested and exiled to North Gyeongsang Province and then to Gangjin in South Cholla Province, where he would spend nineteen years. It was there that he adopted his *nom de plume*, Dasan, and also composed new interpretations for the Classics: the *Juyeok Simjeon* (周易心箋); the *Yeokhak Seo-on* (易學緒言); the *Ron-o Gogumju* (論語古今註); the *Maengja Youi* (孟子要義); the *Jung yong Jajam* (中庸自箴); the *Daehak Gongui* (大學公議); the *Sokyuron* (俗儒論); and the *Ohak-ron* (五學論).

The reign of King Jeongjo has been described as a period of renaissance, indeed one in which Dasan's multifarious interests could flourish. But the corrupt feudal mentality, the harsh economic situation and the hardships of the peasantry continued to be a constant issue in Dasan's mind. Like other scholars, Dasan proposed new approaches to social, political, scientific and philosophical problems, and he wrote extensively on such topics as taxation and land system, government organisation and system, national legislation, school and military systems, and so on. We will limit our discussion of Dasan to his views regarding the Deity and 'virtue.'

#### a. *Dasan's View on the Deity*

Dasan's encounter with Cheonjuhak certainly reinforced a theoretical belief in the Deity, or the *Sin* (神), itself able to govern Heaven and Earth and the ten thousand things. Agreeing with the traditional conception, he also called this deity Heaven or Sangje. Heaven conveyed two essential meanings, and this is the way Dasan interpreted it:

...Speaking of that high and bright Heaven one is comparing it with the blue sky. [However] by the sentence, "The Mandate of Heaven is inscrutable and infinite", one is referring to what in Heaven is spiritual

and brilliant [靈明] and sovereign [主體].<sup>98)</sup>

Thus, Heaven comprised the natural firmament above and a spiritualised dimension, the Deity, that supervised the lives and affairs in the created world. In the past, Dasan held, the seonbi recognised the dual meaning of Heaven: the spiritual sphere distinct from the earth; and the blue, round wide sky. The latter could be spoken of in terms of Yin and Yang. Hence, the Sun is the Great Yang -- pure fire -- and the Moon, the Great Yin -- pure water. In Heaven -- above and below -- everything was included, water and fire, earth and stones, days and months, stars and planets and there was an inscrutable spiritual virtue running through it all: the Deity which embraced Heaven.

By assigning a sovereign virtue to Heaven, Dasan was obviously giving it a personal and volitional significance. This conception de-emphasised Cheng I's traditional understanding of principle, which affirmed that it is one but its manifestations are many.<sup>99)</sup> As he further elaborated, one calls Heaven the physical appearance (形體); Sangje, its sovereignty (以主宰謂之帝). This last idea was strongly stressed by Dasan, who nevertheless also insisted on the Tao, which penetrates all things and is the latent principle in things: it cannot be separated from them. This idea was surmised by Chu Hsi's equating of Heaven with Principle (天即理). Chu Hsi's philosophical system stressing the notion of a sovereign Heaven, itself identified with principle, was overshadowed by a more immanent, though mechanical value-system. According to Dasan, it would not be proper to claim that natural phenomena, like the seasonal changes, should be attributed to *i*, for it lacks in terms of sovereign knowledge. In fact, he suggested, the actions of Heaven are another name for the changes in nature, which are guided by a quiescent though sovereign principle. As such, it differs from Neo-Confucianism's mechanical principle, as there is an element of volition in the actions performed by Heaven.

The sovereign character of Heaven was a common premise, as Cheng I

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98) Dasan, J., *Yeoyudang Jeonjib* (與猶堂全集), 'Jung yong Jajam', Jeonju: Jeonju University Press, 1986, 3.5.

99) *SBCP*, p. 544.

had noted, but Dasan was looking for a subtler source of knowledge permeating Heaven's spiritual and brilliant aspect which further penetrated the human mind:

As the spiritual brilliancy [靈明] of Heaven penetrates the human mind, there is no way it cannot keep a close watch, no matter how well something is hidden. Regardless of how small something may be, there is no way it cannot be revealed. It overlooks [one's] inner room and daily keeps its vigil. Truly, if people knew this, no matter how big they were, they would rather exercise self-restraint and be awe-stricken.<sup>100)</sup>

In other words, "in his conduct the superior man gives preponderance to reverence."<sup>101)</sup> Hence, Dasan's argument transcended the formal conception of Heaven, as thought of by Cheng I and Chu Hsi. If it was sovereign, Heaven also manifested spiritual brilliancy, which the human mind reflexively shared. But Dasan fell short of conceiving of a Supreme God. He thought that Heaven's spiritual brilliancy could not be explained in terms of *i* only, which is unfathomable, nor the result of the actions of Ying and Yang, for these lack in form (體質) and cannot be the "father and mother of the created world".<sup>102)</sup>

Although Dasan criticised Cheng-Chu's mechanical, impersonal rendition of principle, he could not assign a definite character to the existence of a Deity, for his foundation was purely theoretical. The reference to exercise self-restraint and be awe-stricken was also discussed by Dasan insofar as in the *Doctrine of the Mean* virtue means watchfulness when alone (慎獨). This idea is expressed thus:

"Though the ceiling looks down upon you, be free from shame even in the recess of your own house."<sup>103)</sup>

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100) Dasan, J., *Yeoyudang Jeonjib* (與猶堂全集), vol. 1, Seoul: Yeogang Press, 1989, 3.5. The passage reads in Chinese, 天之靈明 直通人心 無隱不祭無微 不燭照臨 此室日監在茲 人苟知此雖有大膽者 不能不戒慎恐懼矣.

101) Wilhem, R., tr., *I Ching, or Book of Changes*, London: Arkana, 1989, p. 241.

102) Dasan, J., *op. cit.*, p. 110.

103) *SBCP*, 'Doctrine of the Mean', ch. 33, p. 113.

If being watchful when alone does not infer the presence of spiritual beings (鬼神), Dasan rationalised, then there is no way one can be awe-stricken. Therefore, concluded Dasan, the root of Tao -- the latent principle penetrating all things -- is the virtue of the spirit. The Tao of the profound person implies the exercise of caution (君子之道 費而隱).<sup>104)</sup> Dasan credited the idea of the Deity to Yi Byeok's interpretation of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, which he presented to the king.

*b. Dasan's View on Virtue*

In the *Jung yong Jajam*, Dasan presented his views to King Jeongjo. Inquiring about personal devotion to moral character (尊德性), the king asked whether one could speak of moral character being the result of high study and attentive scholarship. Even if one exalted moral character, one's tranquil demeanour could be found to be lacking, so whence did learning arise? One wishes to get hold of it, lest it can fly away and disappear.<sup>105)</sup>

Dasan answered by asking if moral character cannot but be exalted, as it was endowed by Heaven above (上天). Scholarship, on the other hand, is the illustrious task performed by the king himself; hence, those who receive the royal command (君命) do not dare to incur evil and thus are guided by virtue and moral obligation; but those who receive the Mandate of Heaven do not dare to incur evil for they follow humanness (仁), and "that is all to it." How can tranquil demeanour be lacking? In the past, Dasan contended, the sages focused on filial piety (孝), brotherly respect (弟), loyalty (忠) and faithfulness (信) to establish poetry (詩), literature (書), the rites (禮) and music (樂). So, how can be said that these cannot be preserved and transmitted to future generations?

Moral Virtue (德性) was for Dasan synonymous with the Mandate of Heaven (天命), and devotion to moral virtue (從天命) meant absolute sincerity (致誠). Based on the *Doctrine of the Mean's* first teaching, the meaning of knowing Heaven must firstly exalt moral character, establish utmost devotion (博厚) and

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104) Dasan, J., *op. cit.*, p. 309.

105) *Ibid.*, p. 376.



noble wisdom (高明). Instruction (教) should be initially pursued by a practical method, so it could subsequently lead to a more rigorous stage. This way, the *Doctrine of the Mean's* Tao can be found, which is our own Tao's zenith. Thus, how could it be spoken of as the small Tao (小道)? One should not debase the *Doctrine of the Mean*, nor the love towards moral character, but one must naturally distinguish between the Tao of Heaven (天道) and the Human Tao (人道).

Dasan was so sure of his views that although he might have committed a mortal crime, he felt it was correct to say that in acquiring Utmost Devotion and Noble Wisdom one assumed the basis for existing eternally by reviewing the past in order to learn the new (溫古知新), and sincerely respecting the rites. The *Doctrine of the Mean*, he concluded with the help of Yi Byeok, is the harmonious focus (中和) of righteousness, and religiously speaking, "does this not mean a path leading to righteous eternity?"<sup>106)</sup> Dasan suggested that this harmonious focus -- or the state of harmony as Legge translated it -- can be explained by the pictograph middle (中) which although implying the focus of utmost virtue, can easily grow slant and partial if in the course of time it is left only keeping the middle path (中道); the pictograph harmony (和) also implies utmost virtue and if harmony is sustained for a long time its flow can be easily overwhelmed. The harmonious focus or the Mean (中庸) is therefore what is without deflection or whose flow is not overwhelmed.

Sincerity -- *Seong* (誠)-- according to Dasan points to contrasting but integrative views, as one reads in the *Great Learning* (大學) and the *Doctrine of the Mean*. *Seong* in the former is rooted in self-cultivation (修身), in the governing of the family (齊家) and in bringing peace to the whole world (平天下), which are the duties of the Son of Heaven and the profound person. In the *Doctrine of the Mean*, on the other hand, sincerity is rooted in the 'knowledge of Heaven' (知天). It surrounds Sangje and infuse the heart with cautiousness and apprehensiveness (戒慎恐懼).<sup>107)</sup> This was perfectly exemplified by the King Wen in the *Book of Odes*, which says:

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106) Ibid., p. 379. See also, Legge, *The Chinese Classics*, vol. I, p. 384.

107) *SBCP*, 'Great Learning', ch.7:1; 'Doctrine of the Mean', ch. 1:2.

This king [Wen]  
Watchfully and reverently  
With entire intelligence served God [Sangje]...,  
[He] conformed to the example of his ancestors.<sup>108)</sup>

While one can properly say that the *Great Learning* addresses the practical world, and the *Doctrine of the Mean* explores the ideal world, these Classical texts can be nevertheless harmonised in the profound person's path of self-cultivation.

The *Doctrine of the Mean* points to a possible though abstruse knowledge of Heaven, which means watchfulness when alone which leads one back to sincerity.<sup>109)</sup> Indeed, Dasan further contended that watchfulness and being minute are operations of Heaven (隱微者上天之載也).<sup>110)</sup> Thus, the person of sincerity, in being deferential to Sangje, is by herself apprehensive, or reflexively relates to the Deity in sincerity.

Yi Byeok was a major influence in Dasan's commentary of the *Doctrine of the Mean*.<sup>111)</sup> He considered Yi Byeok's scholarship peerless, and lamented the early death of his Namin relative.<sup>112)</sup> Dasan's discussion of *seong* is important because it can also shed more light on Yi Byeok's mature, supplemental thought as he accommodated to Cheonjuhak. Dasan argued that *seong* only appeared in the sixteenth chapter of the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and in connection with the approaches of the spirits. Although the pictograph "sincerity" did not conspicuously appear in the early chapters, he argued, it should be borne in mind that *seong* meant watchfulness when alone (慎獨), which appears in the first chapter. This coincides with Legge's view, who pointed out that the references to a dark place (隱), small matters (細), the place which other men do not know, and is known

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108) Legge, J. *The She King*, Bk. I, ode II, 3; ode VI, 2; pp. 431,447.

109) Dasan, *op. cit.*, *Jung Yong Jajam*, 2:54, p. 430. The text reads, 莫顯乎隱 莫顯乎微 知隱之見知微之顯則知天矣 知天自慎其獨 慎其獨即誠也.

110) *Ibid.*

111) Dasan, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 262.

112) Yi Byeok's wife was Dasan's sister.

only to one's self alone (獨), can only be taken in connection with the subsequent passages on *seong*.

It was in terms of *seong* that Dasan interpreted the passages which speak of Hui, who firmly clasped whatever was good, as if wearing it on his breast.<sup>113)</sup> Because of *seong*, one has to exert strenuous efforts, if in her practice she is found to harbour anything defective.<sup>114)</sup> As Dasan put, if one thinks of knowing somebody, one cannot help thinking of Heaven, for the path is not far away from the individual existence (道不遠人), who reflexively responds to a web of relationships.<sup>115)</sup>

Moreover, when the individual existence is alone a heart of minuteness vividly manifests (微之顯), in which case Dasan argued that the Deity, or the Spirit itself descends. According to Dasan, this was the reason that in the *Doctrine of the Mean's* initial reference to spiritual beings the pictograph *seong* became interpolated. In fact it can be said that from King Shun to King Wen it emerged intermittently, both vividly and most abstrusely. If it can also be said that *seong* is an overlapping concept, it is no less truth that as a flower it holds its perfume which is secretly spread as it blooms: since *seong* is one, how can the Way of Heaven be extricated from the Way of Humanness?<sup>116)</sup>

Dasan noted that the way of the profound person is said to be abstruse because it is unreachable; and it is unreachable because abstruse: language seems to be only inappropriate to render the relation meaningful. This is what Confucius himself may have referred as he was quoted in the *Analects* as saying:

'I wish I could do without words,' said the Master. 'If you did not speak, Sir,' said Tzu Kung, 'what should we disciples pass on to others?' 'What speech has Heaven?' replied the Master. 'The four seasons run their

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113) Legge J., *The Chinese Classics*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1960 p. 389.

114) Ibid., ch. XIII, p. 394.

115) Ibid. For Dasan's argument, see *Yeoyudang Jeonjip*, vol. 1, p. 357.

116) Dasan, *op. cit.*, p. 358. Or as Chang Tsai put, and Dasan quoted, when "the Way of Heaven...and the nature of man...function separately, there cannot be sincerity." *SBCP*, p. 507.

courses and all things flourish; yet what speech has Heaven?'<sup>117)</sup>

When *seong* was not practised it could not be manifest, or figuratively speaking, since it was not practised it could not appear at the gate. In other words, since it was unknown it could not be practised. But the sages practised *seong* and the more they did, the more brilliant it became.

The above discussion was the gist of Dasan's discussion of the *Doctrine of the Mean's* passage "Sincerity is the Way of Heaven" (誠者天之道也)<sup>118)</sup>, and concisely discussed in its chapter 21 and developed in the following twelve chapters. Dasan systematically discussed other passages, which we shall only note in passing, but the discussion of *seong* seems to have been inspired by Yi Byeok. The two passages in which he directly quoted Yi Byeok are those discussing the good and the stupid (子曰愚好自用) and the ceremonies of the Hsia dynasty (子曰吾說夏禮).

We have mentioned Dasan's rendering of the concept of harmonious focus or equilibrium (中和), which could lead the *seong-in* to eternity. This was a notion borrowed from Yi Byeok.<sup>119)</sup> Dasan occasionally quoted his Namin friend, as he surveyed the opinions of Neo-Confucianism's scholars, following a question asked by King Jeongjo whether the present generation could re-establish the Way of the ancients, as in the Three Dynasties period. Dasan reminded the king that only Yao and Shung were said to have conquered the Way. Not even Confucius, who diligently practised self-righteousness (德善) and managed to restore and transmit the way of the ancients was able to conquer the Tao.<sup>120)</sup>

The king asked if the sovereign -- as the personification of the sage, but by failing to act as one -- could be blamed for the fragmentation of rites, music, and so on. Dasan reminded the monarch that the ancient sage emperors established the rites and music, and the later generations simply had to follow. In the *Book of*

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117) Soothill, W. E., trans., *The Analects*, bk. XVII, ch. XIX., New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995.

118) Legge, J., *op. cit.*, ch. 20:18.

119) Dasan, J., *op. cit.*, p. 379.

120) *Ibid.*, p. 381.

*Odes*, Dasan argued, it is said that 'blemishlessness', or that which is incapable of being forgotten had its origins in the ancient tradition established in the Yin, T'ang and Chou dynasties. Hence, following the old tradition meant observing the rites, music, and so on and so forth, which also stemmed from the Son of Heaven. Next, Dasan quoted Yi Byeok, who offered the following interpretation:

It is not correct to think that the sovereign (人君) attains sagemess by himself and then establishes the rites and music. It is simply that the establishment of the rites and music cannot proceed if not by the person who attains sagemess. How can we know that? The sage is the one who clearly knows the gains [利益] and the corrupt practices of people's mind and body, and also the one who cannot but establish the people's original loving mind. If this is not so, then what is the sage like? His virtue is ever flourishing [盛]. As flourishing, it is humble; being humble how can he profess to have attained sagemess all by himself and behave [制作] like the ancient kings?<sup>121)</sup>

Thus, according to Yi Byeok, the sage is the person who actualises virtue by being humbly and compassionately sensitive and to the hearts and mind of the people; someone who can follow the works of the sage emperors. In other words, the "sovereign" acts and actualises virtue through sagemess, and a deep sense of affection (*sensu amandi*). The following direct reference to Yi Byeok comes immediately after, as Dasan discussed the rites of Hsia dynasty. In this section he quoted some famous scholars and by so doing Dasan finally elaborated on his notion of the Tao:

The reason for the Tao to be practised is that the people follow it, and the reason for the people to follow is that they put their trust [in the Tao]. Without hesitation [不悖] or doubt [無疑], they believe in the Tao and follow it.<sup>122)</sup>

He went on to literally quote Yi Byeok, but not without a strong metaphysical leaning:

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121) Ibid., pp. 384-385.

122) Ibid., p. 386.

The sage gives great emphasis to evidence because it has to do with people's trust. But truly, even in the absence of evidence, what hurt would there be if the people [simply] trusted? Hence, the sage takes himself as the root, and the people's living experiences as evidence: this is the Mandate of Heaven's Tao. It is also following the historical example of the Three Kings [三王]. By saying this there is no offense against Heaven and Earth. Considering the fact that both of these lack necessary evidence, what need would there be for one to be bound to proof? If this were not so, whence came the Tao of the Three Kings? Hence, this also means taking oneself as the root and relying on people's trust as evidence. Accordingly, the Tao is the Mandate of Heaven's Tao, so it will remain the same, whether the spiritual beings are invoked or the ancient sages appealed to.<sup>123)</sup>

#### VI. Conclusion

The Silhak and Namim scholars we have studied in this chapter were in many ways ahead of their time, as they envisioned a society freed from the yoke of an overarching system of castes. They dwelt on the 'real' (實) as against the perceived sterility of Neo-Confucianism's theory. It seems significant that these thinkers were from Gyeonggi and Jeolla (Giho) provinces, where the effects caused by successive foreign invasions, the Noron monarchy, the rapacity of landlords and the oppressing burden of taxes intensified the sufferings of the people almost perpetually. Yi Ik, whose scholarship led the Namin faction, dared to question the status quo and see the applicability of new Western scientific techniques. He was not very much impressed with Cheonjuhak, however, which was critically expounded by An Jeong-bok, his gutsy disciple, whose criticisms we have discussed in some detail in his *Questions and Answers*.

In light of the epistemological differences between Cheonjuhak and Confucianism, it seemed only natural that their modes of expression regarding belief and proper conduct became mutually antithetical. This is particularly true as one considers the major divergences between Cheonjuhak's worship of the Lord of Heaven and Confucianism's *cheollye* (天禮), i.e., the worship of Heaven, ancestor

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123) Ibid., p. 387.



worship and the sacrificial service to Confucius.

Both Sunam and Dasan observed that the concept of Heaven, insofar as it referred to Sangje in both Catholic doctrine and Confucianism, coincided, but if in the latter Heaven was associated with one's exercise of caution while alone (慎獨), respectfulness and cultivation of personal moral character, in the former, one had to bow five times a day before Heaven and greet it communally once a week. According to Sunam one should beg for the remission of sins and for personal salvation. Hence, insofar as the worship of Sangje was an individual affair, Sunam concluded, it was hardly distinguishable from Buddhism with its ritualised prayers and acts of penitence.

The notion of the Lord of Heaven, imported from Matteo Ricci's *TMLH* and other Jesuit works, revealed a profound understanding of cause. As we noted, the Joseon scholars agreed that the Western conceptions of Cheonju (天主) and Confucianism's Sangje (上帝) were compatible (天主即上帝也). However, while one was orthodox, the other was heretical. In China, Heaven was associated with King Wen, for instance, but in the West, Sunam suggested that the worship of Heaven was a fabrication the feudal lords imposed on the people in order to resolve the differences between the various religious systems. The reverence of the Lord of Heaven was encouraged as a way to avoid conflict between them.

The young Namin seonbi, who would eventually supplement Tradition and engage in religious abstractions, were not only impressed with Western science, but deeply interested in deriving from Cheonjuhak a doctrine which they saw could transcend, however mystically, Joseon's inherent philosophical contradictions, and yet find resonance in the *Classics*. Being an idealistic community of seonbi, the group may have been naïve not to anticipate the dire consequences of their projected course of action, as they actively sought in Cheonjuhak a co-relational basis upon which the literati tradition could accommodate itself. Dasan's older brother Jeong Yak-jong clearly took this route; it was Yi Byeok, however, who in the *EST* accommodated Cheonjuhak to Confucianism by composing a text structurally similar to the *Book of Odes*.

In the spring of 1785 the existence of their activities were officially reported to the government, and there aroused strong criticisms against it which,



from the perspective of those who sympathized with Cheonjuhak, were subsequently blamed on Sunam. Hence, his critical evaluation of Catholic doctrine had no relevance to the seonbi who decided to follow the path of a metaphysical ideal: the belief that the individual and society at large could be sympathetically re-oriented towards the spiritual realm of human existence whose "illustration of illustrious [virtue]"<sup>124)</sup> was the descended Jesus; a point Dasan made in his discussion of sagemess and *seong*.

Sunam finally bolted from the Namin party, but not without leaving a stern warning against Cheonjuhak and a renewed appeal to the supremacy of orthodoxy as opposed to a purely religious cultural interchange. He strongly urged his fellow Nanimis to refrain from investigating Cheonjuhak and worshipping the Lord of Heaven. He did this by reminding them of the maxim which called one to reject heresies (關異端) and preserve Yi Ik's scholarship, thus maintaining the order of descent, partisan cohesion and group intra-marriage. But to his disappointment, this appeal fell on deaf ears. The encounter with Cheonjuhak had produced more than heretical partisanship, and those who sympathised with it went on to write about their newly found, supplemental teaching. This is what Yi Byeok did as he composed two literary pieces, a *Hymn* and the *Essence of Sage Teaching*.

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124) Legge, L. *The She King*, bk. I, ode II, 1, p. 432.

## Chapter Four

### 聖教要旨

#### *Seonggyo yoji* – Yi Byeok's *The Essence of Sage Teaching (EST)*

*As I carefully listened to [the Court pundits] I wondered how one would accomplish the "Essence of Sageness" [聖學輯要] as this appears in the Classics [四書五經].<sup>1)</sup>*

#### I. Introduction

This chapter will introduce the translation of the *EST*, by following its three structural poetical frames (Parts One, Two and Three). It will also include Yi Byeok's minor poem, the *Hymn for the Reverence of the Lord of Heaven*, or *Cheonju gonggyeong-ga* (天主恭敬歌), a poem-song written for the common people with the purpose of instilling a sense of urgency for Yaso's teaching.<sup>2)</sup> The *Essence of the Sage Teaching*, on the other hand, targets the *yangban* class and is written for the *yurim* (儒林) -- *seonbi*, the literati -- in *hansi* (韓詩), Chinese verse, closely following the *Book of Odes*. As it will be noted, Yi Byeok himself was keenly aware that insofar as he was dealing with a foreign material, he needed to write brief explanations at the end of each metrical verse. But he also tried to clarify the pictographs he was introducing, sometimes as neologisms, to convey his supplemental exegesis. This he did because of the 'foreignness' of the doctrine and its terminology. Yi Byeok's explanatory notes are at the end of each verse, in italics. The translation is rendered in free verse which does not attempt to follow the original metre.

For convenience, we have structured the text by dividing its three sections

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1) As we have noticed elsewhere, this is a quote by Yun Jung, See *Chapter Three*, note 28.

2) We will be referring to Jesus as *Yaso*, as in the *EST*.

in A, B, and C, and we used letters followed by numbers, thus for example, *a.1*, *b.7*, *c.12*, etc., and sometimes a brief title for each verse -- which was done in Parts B and C. This translation is based on the original version appearing in the *Anthology of Mancheon*.<sup>3)</sup> At other times we may also include whole or partial verses in brackets. We will also include the individual pictographs to which Yi Byeok is calling his reader's attention, as he tried to semantically clarify some of them in the appended commentaries that follow each passage.

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3) *Mancheon Yugo* (曼川遺稿). Author, date and publisher unknown, 54 pp. The original version is kept at Sungshil University in Seoul.



盟 赫 薨 黑  
密 似 崩 幽  
恪 賞 眼 覩  
謹 譽 軫 驚

II. The Hymn for the Reverence of the Lord of Heaven

天主敬歌

Ye, friends of this world over  
For a moment do pay heed  
To what I have to say:  
As in the household adults lead their life  
So does the King ruling over his dominion.  
As in my body a soul lives within,  
So does in Heaven the Lord on High.  
To one's parents filial piety should be dispensed,  
And loyalty is rightly due before the King.  
Let us keep the three principles and five disciplines  
And above all let us adore the Lord of Heaven.  
Should my very body die and scatter away,  
My soul breathing within shall live on.  
Neglect humanity, reverence  
And the immortality of the soul and  
You shall gather trees and stones in life,<sup>4)</sup>  
And in death, come upon *Jiok*.  
There exists the Lord of Heaven, if you know,  
Do not keep adoring the image of the Buddha.  
If you know and yet do not realise,  
Then unto you only baleful offenses shall  
Increasingly accumulate.  
Ye, who fearlessly incur grave transgressions,  
Do not contend there is no Lord of Heaven:  
Have you ever seen a child not fathered?  
Is there a sunny spot without shade?  
As you have never been brought before the King's presence  
Does it mean you are not the people of his kingdom?  
*Cheondang* and *Jiok*<sup>5)</sup>: who have them visited?

Ye, people of this time and age, do not wrangle over this.  
The scholar who neglects *cheondang*  
How come he would posit its nonexistence?  
Then, wrangle ye not, but adore the Lord of Heaven!  
It may dawn on you, once you believe  
That He is glory eternal until the end of time.

---

4) Metaphorically, a gatherer of trees and stones means a person who lives a dull life, devoid of *jen* (仁), humanness.

5) Literally, Palace of Heaven (天堂) and Dungeon Place, Hell (地獄).

III. Essence of Sage Teaching

聖教要旨

Part One

A. Introduction to Sage Teaching

This is a work composed by Yi Gwang-am Byeok based on the readings of the texts concerning the Sage Teaching.<sup>6)</sup>

a.1

Before humanity<sup>7)</sup> came into being  
There was Sangje<sup>8)</sup>  
It is the unique true Spirit<sup>9)</sup>  
Whose *seong*<sup>10)</sup> and prowess are unequaled.

It worked during six days and unveiled [闢]<sup>11)</sup>  
Heaven and Earth and the ten thousand things  
In their bounteous yearning  
And abstruseness.

Out of the wet earth [the Spirit] shaped a congenial creature  
And pulled out<sup>12)</sup> a soul thenceforth.

---

6) Yi Byeok, like many other scholars, had a courtesy name, Gwang-am. The doctrine he is about to introduce to the *seonbi*, the scholarly class, is presented as a virtuous learning leading to the nearness of -- or return to -- Heaven, of which Yaso is a *jeonghan*-bond in his self-perfecting relation with God, tradition and humankind. This relation could be called "an example of suffering and patience" (Jm 5:10), hence, one of "infinite resignation", or self-expenditure. The whole work, as pointed out, originally follows the poetic pattern of metre of the *Book of Odes*, i.e. a stanza with four pictographs set in four lines.

7) Humanity not as the ethical attribute of *jen*, but the human race.

8) *Sangje* (上帝), or the Lord on High.

9) *Jin Sin* (眞神)

10) *Seong* (聖), the sanctity of the Spirit, as one would refer to the being *kadosh* of the Eternal One.

11) *It*, of course, the true Spirit distinguished as "*idea et exemplar virtutum*". *Byeok* (闢) in its first sense, means to open up, to unveil but also, to depart from, to extricate oneself from. Thus, the reading allows for a Creating Virtue perceived in the aloofness of creation from which the *It* may be said as having withdrawn Itself. In this sense the Spirit may be 'seen' as "Withdrawal and not expansion... who creates solely by excluding himself." See, Blanchot, M., *The Writing of the Disaster*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995 p. 13.

12) While one would expect the creature being infused with the divine breath (Gen. 2:7), Yi Byeok uses the

It provided the creature with shelter,  
Food and benefits which were countless.

Seeking the good of the family,  
A female companion was created [Let her assist man!]  
And the Spirit called them man and woman.  
It taught them: "You and I are both of the same nature."<sup>13)</sup>

Oftentimes man desired to know the new:  
There was nothing he had not acquired.  
And so he desired to know good and evil  
"Do not touch or eat" [of the fruit].<sup>14)</sup>

"It will be fine if you eat it  
For you shall see and hear"<sup>15)</sup>  
Man lent an ear and studiously held [the fruit]:  
This is the origin of sin.

*In the above passage Sangju [上主] created all things for man's sake.  
But how dare man violated the divine prohibition, thus incurring sin.<sup>16)</sup>*

a.2

In the footsteps of the tradition of Abel:  
His devotion led him to offer a sheep in sacrifice  
But his older brother Cain killed him,  
And to this day this act crosses over the generations.

The descendents of Cain are concerned with  
Profit and hubris, for they  
Love their bodies and the sating of lust.<sup>17)</sup> [愛身尼色]  
They praise both power and gold,  
While their Father's will is left unheeded.

---

pictograph *ral* (持) [yeong 靈] to mold the spirit. The same pictograph, with a slight variation, may be taken to mean pull out.

13) *I-a yo-ja* 爾我如自, an expression which promotes the ideal of familial harmony, is here understood more in the sense that one's Edenic nature is manifest in the immediate sharing of a Heaven-bestowed humanness between man and woman.

14) Gen 2:15.

15) Gen 3:4.

16) As we have said, this brief explanatory note is Yi Byeok's attempt to summarize the teaching's main points and explain, as we shall see below, some specific Chinese pictographs.

17) Gen 6:11.



But a servant there was who understood it.  
And the time finally came when  
A great flood covered the four directions  
And in it all the living perished.

But what befell the servant's family?  
They all entered an ark (方舟);  
And they were righteous, the family's seven members (居入者)  
Who matched the eight pairs of animals  
And led them into the ark.

*According to the text above, the people violated Sangju's commandments [prohibitions] and fell into sin: inhumanity, bloodshed, greed and all other sorts of evil. As time went by sin became greater and a great flood resulted, for Sangju abhorred all the impurities found upon the earth. Perhaps if at that point there remained no righteous people, the human race would have been totally annihilated. Ni (尼) or Nil denotes Noah, the servant, and Banggae (方蓋), the ark. The residents (Goipja, 居入者) allude to Noah and his family (seven people); the eight relatives refer to the pairs of clean animals, male and female, which were brought into the ark.<sup>18)</sup>*

a.3

And now [one comes] to the Teaching of Gidok<sup>19)</sup>  
Which added up to the blessings of the world;  
Yaso descended<sup>20)</sup>  
He is the veritable (實) rescuer<sup>21)</sup>

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18) Cf. Gen 7:2. Yi Byeok speaks not of seven pairs, but eight.

19) *Gidok*, transliteration for Christ. Here Yi Byeok refers to *Dokgyo* (督教), thus facilitating a comparison or reference to other teachings (*gyo* 教): Buddhism (*Bulgyo*), Taoism (*Dogyo*), Confucianism (*Yugyo*), etc. *Dokgyo* is the teaching which leads one to an enlarged path, Yi Byeok suggested. The Yaso he now portrays seems to be the result of a closer scrutiny of earlier Jesuit books like Pantoja's description of the Nazarene, and father Joseph Marie de Mailla's *Seonggyong Gwang-ik* (聖經廣益 or *Les Evangiles de Dimanche*), published in Beijing in the eighteenth century. As we may recall, Matteo Ricci's reference to Yaso, at the end of his *TMLH*, is as cryptic as Yi Byeok's rendering of the Fall.

20) The term for incarnation is *gangsaeung* (降生), where *gang* means descent, just like in the two-pictograph expression used by Yi Byeok, *gangha* (降下). Thus, he clearly seems to be speaking of an epiphany, a descent from Heaven similar to the one found in the myth of Dangun, the divine ancestor of the Korean people whose father descended from Heaven.

21) The lord-rescuer, *guju* or more forcefully, *gusaeju*, the lord-rescuer of the world. Late in eighteenth century Joseon the people anticipated the 'messianic' coming of the righteous one (*Jongdoryeong* 正道令). And

Whom amongst threesome is the second (等間于三)  
And partaker of the five elements (倫出於五).

To the royal palace he went as a young man;  
And at the assembly received the Scriptures  
And by all *seonbi* was duly recognised;  
For his knowledge was truly extensive  
And he observed the rites and propriety.

[Behold] His twelve followers!  
The village of Nengbyeon<sup>22)</sup>  
Crossing beyond the Pamirs (巴米)  
The land of the Yutae<sup>23)</sup>  
[Where lies] Mount Sonae<sup>24)</sup>  
The King was gracious and magnanimous,  
As we shall see in the next lines.

*In the above passage, Sangju arranged for the descent of the rescuer into a world filled with evil. He took pity of the people who cannot attain redemption and so He sent his son as the rescuer of the whole world. The expression deunggan usam (等間于三), 'the second of a triad' means that Yaso is the second person amongst three spiritual entities, while the expression yunchol eo-o (倫出於五), 'participant of the five elements' implies that Yaso, himself the child of the Spirit (神), was born and raised in the [material] world.*

a.4

He set up a flesh tent<sup>25)</sup>  
And forgave those who erred, were led astray.  
Thus taking to himself the misfortune of this foolish generation,<sup>26)</sup>

---

now here one is invited to believe that one such jongdoryeong has already descended somewhere beyond the furthest confines of the Pamir Mountains. In this passage Yi Byeok does not refer to the route to Bethany, as Kim O. H. translated, but to the Pamirs. Cf. her *Le Role de Yi Byeok dans l'introduction et la diffusion du Catholicisme en Corée*, PhD dissertation, Paris: Université de Paris Sorbonne, Paris IV, 1977, p. 169.

22) *Nengbyeon* (冷邊), Jerusalem.

23) *Yutaeguk* (猶太國) the land of the Jewish.

24) *Sonae* (西山), Mount Sinai.

25) *Bimak* (皮幕) a tent of skin, the Rescuer himself. Exodus 26:14 refers to a tent of skin, but Yi Byeok also portrays Yaso as a tent where the divine presence "dwelt among mortals" as in Psalms 78:60.

26) Isa 53:3-12.

While his fame grew bigger and wider.

He passed through all sufferings,  
And his merit became clearly manifest.  
Ye, who follow the origins of this teaching:  
Let it remain forever.

*The above passage is a summary of what follows. Mak (幕, tent) is a metaphor for the body. [Cf.] Deukhuseo [得後書, Peter].<sup>27)</sup>*

a.5

[Yaso's] Mother, the wife of Seul<sup>28)</sup>  
Awaited her marriage since childhood.  
Graceful and pure as a lotus flower,  
The purity of an orchid her character resembled.

In a dream her destiny she met<sup>29)</sup>  
And a son bore the woman.  
From the Orient the Wise Men  
Came -- as they followed a battalion of light (軍光) --  
And arrived in a shabby room [where the child descended]:  
One by one they bowed deeply before him.

*In the above verse, Heaven made a portent manifest when Yaso was born into this world for the first time. A battalion of light (軍光) means the light of a star.*

a.6

Emperor Hu<sup>30)</sup> was extremely ruthless.  
To every family he handed down a death penalty;  
So the child was carried away to a distant land.  
They crossed the border and disappeared.

Finally when the king died

---

27) 2 Pet 2:24.

28) Seulcheo (瑟妻)) Joseph's wife.

29) Yi Byeok uses the pictograph *yeon* (緣) to refer to the inevitability of Mary's mystical conception.

30) King Herod, to whom Yi Byeok referred as emperor *Hu* (后皇).

The family returned.  
Yet still fearing the renewal of hostilities  
Shelter they took into deep darkness.

As the barbarian King grew old and bald  
His fur thinned away and fell (荒);  
When the Dragon appeared, its head rose high.  
-- Ah! The persecution was over --  
Luckily the dragon escaped  
For it is the one without beginning or end.

*The preceding passage says that after confronting persecution and suffering as a child Yaso finally secured his safety. Barbarian means a barren existence; as one grows old one's fur falls (荒). Metaphorically, a head growing bald implies the use of violence. The dragon refers to Yaso.*

a.7

Han<sup>31)</sup> crying out in the wilderness:  
"Repent, and stop [doing evil]!"<sup>32)</sup>  
By a river [Yaso] was baptised. (洗)  
He acted in righteousness and overcame (越) violations.

He spoke in metaphors: the tree which bears fruit  
It shall satisfy one's mouth  
Otherwise, with an axe one cuts it down  
And throws it into the fire.<sup>33)</sup>

*The above reports about Yaso's baptism (洗). The pictograph ha (河 river) refers to River Yakdan (河約但, Jordan) and the pictograph wol (越) means excess.*

a.8

Yaso encountered the wicked one who  
Showed the bread to eat and  
Took him to the top of a palace.  
Crossing the walls, the wicked one led him

---

31) Han, (翰) John the Baptist who cries out in the wilderness (向野翰呼). Lk 3:1-6.

32) Mt 3:2.

33) Mt 3:10; Lk 3:9.

With promises of fame and glory  
If only Yaso venerated<sup>34)</sup> him.

[Alas] "Whomever practices virtue seeking a reward  
Ends up losing righteousness in a whirl of emptiness<sup>35)</sup>  
I respect the One who has sent me, for I do his will:  
How you dare tempt me?"<sup>36)</sup>

*The passage teaches that Yaso is tempted by the wicked one. As Yaso  
does not fall to the temptations, the wicked one retreats.*

a.9

[Yaso] rode a donkey with glee,  
And gathered the wise and the fool.  
He spread the teaching:  
"The rule of the Kingdom [of Heaven] rests upon me."<sup>37)</sup>

He firmly reproved the disobedient,  
And embraced those who bravely excelled.  
He rejected self-gratification, reproached the intemperate  
"Let the darkly concealed be spread out."<sup>38)</sup>

Anxious about falling into prison (獄)  
He then fled to the desert:  
Him, the collarbone<sup>39)</sup> of [the people of] Jeok-ye (的裔)<sup>40)</sup>  
Travelled around the country and propagated the message:

---

34) *Sung* (崇),

35) The above incisive passage by Yi Byeok reads, 修德圖報 正直兩虛. It may well encompass the whole of Yi Byeok's ethico-religious encounter with Catholic teaching. Borrowing from Hermann Cohen, Yi Byeok could understand that the positive side of retribution, the reward, belongs to the prohibited land of eudaemonism, and thus the only possible reward is identical with the Mishnah's passage: "The reward of duty is the duty" (Midrash Rabba I, 67a), or as Hermann Cohen reminds us, when referring to Spinoza's translation: *praemium virtutis virtus*. See Cohen, H. *Religion of Reason out of the Sources of Judaism*, Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995, p. 321.

36) Mt 4:1-11; Lk 4:1-13.

37) Mt 16:19.

38) Mt 5:16.

39) The pictograph in the sentence originally means an iron crossbar, *hal* (轄).

40) *Ye* (裔), Israel

The beautifully delicate (嫩) flowers bend down and wither away;  
The grain thrown upon the earth germinates...  
Likewise, the birds and the beasts  
Are not troubled about the future at all.

So fear shall end, the ravages [of life] shall be overcome.  
The taste for arms (好甲) has thrown the world in chaos.  
A place well-grounded on hatred and bitter resentment [仇];  
The armies plundering with their chariots.

The horrors [of war] who can forget?  
They crouch body and spirit.  
[Thus] one should believe in this *Seok* [釋]<sup>41)</sup>  
Be grateful to him and yearn for [perfect] *jen*<sup>42)</sup>

*The above passage explains that in his various interventions, Yaso used figures of speech and metaphors to enlighten the people. Prison (獄) refers to the disputes Yaso incurred. The leaders of the teaching [the scribes and the Pharisees] sought to ensnare him in their plots, but Yaso fled [concealed himself]<sup>43)</sup>. Jeok-ye (的裔) refers to the people [of Israel]; nun (嫩) means something beautifully delicate; hogab (好甲), the taste for picking up a fight.*

a.10

[Yaso's] teaching knows no distinction or partisanship;  
Spreading around the whole world,  
It is allowed in the minutest of nations.  
One shall distinguish the false from the virtuous:  
As evil doing stops, one can be blessed in abundance.

---

41) The passage, where Yi Seong-bae translated both in French and in Korean the original sentence, "Il faut donc croire Dieu," (該待此釋) should do justice to a less Christian version of the sentence, for indeed one must believe (特) in the historic Buddha (*Seok*, Sakyamuni) to whom Yaso is compared, as *this* one. Although translating the EST as "*L'Essence de la Sainte Doctrine*", Kim O. H. rendered Yaso not as a "saint" but as "sage", and the above passage as "if faut croire dans la protection de ce sage [this *Seok*]." Cf. Kim O. H., *op. cit.*, ch.5, pp. 155, 177. We have seen in the *Hymn* that Yi Byeok urges the people to stop adoring the image of the Buddha. However, by saying two seemingly contradictory things he may run the risk of being either inconsistent or plainly syncretistic. Since we maintain that he was neither of these, Yi Byeok sought to reconcile the historicity of the first coming of the Rescuer with the kind of salvific faith the people had in Sakyamuni, or the expectation they had in *Jeongdoryeon*, coupled with the general sense of anticipation and urgency felt throughout Joseon society at the end of the eighteenth century. See also Yi S. B., *Yugyo wa Gurisudogyo - Yi Byeok ui hanguk-jok sinhak wonli*, Seoul: Pundochulpansa, 1979, p. 74. (Korean).

42) *Sain* (思仁), to yearn for perfect 'humanity.'

43) Jn 8:59.

By the sea the brothers  
Let go their work and rose  
To follow in [Yaso's] footsteps (武)  
And so they left their villages.

[Yaso's] personal discipline is compassion  
And his will extols and he glorifies:  
Both in prayer and in contemplation,  
As he was conversant with the old tradition<sup>44)</sup>

He marched towards the capital.  
From north to south he travelled.  
[Those] who always intended fraud and rapacity  
He transformed and guided them through peace and devotion.

Burnt offerings were made and the flesh cut off (轄肉)<sup>45)</sup>:  
This was a custom of old;  
The sacrifice of a young sheep or a calf  
One gladly offered and abode in gratitude.

But all these were not enough; one ought to offer  
Personal prayers and hold communal services.  
Sharing the holy wine  
The assembly was exhorted to practice sincerity<sup>46)</sup>  
And this bore testimony to the spread of the Word.

*The above passage explains that in establishing his teaching (教) Yaso renewed the old one. The pictograph mu (武) means footsteps and hal yuk (轄肉), the rites of cutting [circumcision].*

a.11

Words and figures of speech  
Were followed by miracles.  
[Yaso] cared for the tribe [種] and tended [牧] the afflicted,  
During nights, mornings and months.

Evil spirits were expelled and sickness overcome;  
The dirty were made clean and calamities conquered.  
The sleeping dead arose from the grave;

---

44) *Analects* 2:11.

45) *Halyuk* (轄肉), to cut off.

46) *Seong* (誠), sincerity.



A woman who touched his garments was purified.

A boat on high waves he rescued it, by calming down the winds.  
The people gladly saw his curing the infirm  
And restoring the dead to life.  
But the devotion-less he could not help.

All judgement belonged to him:  
Instead of punishing the wicked he extended deliverance,  
For power belonged to him only.  
He overflowed in [self] perfection<sup>47)</sup>  
And always kept a tender heart.

Encountering violence from outside, and sins from inside  
All difficulties he mastered and gained victory.

*In this passage, Yaso works a great many powerful miracles. Jong (鍾) alludes to a tribe and mok (牧), a metaphor for Yaso.*

a.12

In the book of *Sae* (賽)<sup>48)</sup>  
It was long written  
"The ruined universe shall be reconstructed",<sup>49)</sup>  
As it befits this last generation (末期).

Desolation shall give place to a fertile garden  
And all shall sing and rejoice:  
The streets, full of music, the valleys shall echo,  
All this is in the nine thoughts<sup>50)</sup>

*The passage reiterates the truthfulness of the prophecy concerning Yaso, so one can believe that everything is known by Yaso. Sae (賽) is the name of an old prophet [豫言者, e.g., Yisaea, 以賽亞] ; malgi (末期)*

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47) *Seongyeong* (盛盈), to overflow in perfection.

48) *Sae*, Isa 35:1-2.

49) *Hwoe-u jaegon* (毀宇再建).

50) The nine thoughts represent the nine points of thoughtful care the *gunja* (君子), or the profound person should exercise: in "looking, his care is to observe distinctly; in listening, his care is to apprehend clearly; in his appearance, his care is to be kindly; in his manner, his care is to be courteous; in speaking, his care is to be conscientious; in his duties, his care is to be earnest; in doubt, his care is to seek information; in anger, he has a care for the consequences; and when he has opportunity for gain, his care is whether it be right." See *The Analects*, trans. W.E. Soothill, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1995 ch. 10, p.102.

means the last days. *Gusa* (九思) alludes to Confucius's path of virtue as it appears in the *Analects* [論語] and are meant to give evidence to the glory [譽] of *Yaso*.

a.13

Workers, officials, the poor and the rich  
Everyone should relate as a neighbour to one another<sup>51)</sup>  
Moreover, one should obey [服] the word  
[For] all, of all ranks, shall be called.

A bride approached him  
With flasks of perfume and liquor  
By the candlelight they sat:  
What a downpour of pitiful blood [tears]!

*The passage above implies that Yaso came as the rescuer of the whole world, even in the pitiable situation of facing death.*

a.14

In the rain of wisdom, under the clouds of love  
[God's power] spread out for all to see, like thunderbolts (角).  
The frame he took it onto his back and laid it before an altar  
Thus receiving the sacrificial cask (甗).

Someone inspected the goods<sup>52)</sup> and counted the money  
According to necessity shall they be used:  
And thereby the general principles follow.  
[But now *Yaso*] co-participated of the joys of the eternal seat.

[Though] his followers were small and humble,  
They transmitted<sup>53)</sup> the ancestral teaching  
[By] working together and helping others.  
Truly, there is no room for lamentation and dismay:

The idol *Asura* [偶像阿] shall become just  
[Another statute of] copper, iron, stone and wood.  
But if awareness cuts through, all delusions (淫) will be shattered:  
By heeding his words let us renew the [old] custom.

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51) *Jwa-u geungyo* (左友近交).

52) *Hwa* (貨).

53) *Sul* (述).

The above passage says that Yaso enjoys power over the world. As he explained the teaching [說教], he gave himself in sacrifice in order to rescue all the people. In their hearts the people rejoiced: if one observes sincerity [誠服] one will be prepared to attend the judgement. Therefore, should not the tradition of idol worship be renewed? Gak (角) means [the sound of] horns; gwae (賈) means Yaso's brilliant promise [through death]; um (淫), the delusion of senses.

a.15

The open tomb but the body was only resting:  
Soaring up (凌) it ascended into the air (昇)  
To sit on the throne in its majesty.  
He shall advance the imminent call for justice.

The lighter the faults (疑), the lighter the sentence.  
[But] To exonerate oneself from faults is extremely difficult.  
So let the people become aware of the path of delusion  
By resisting [the power of] the mansion of darkness.<sup>54)</sup>

The passage refers to the judgement Yaso, after ascending to Heaven [耶蘇升天之後] will pass to all things. Neung (凌) means to soar up; yeo (昇), to raise with; ui (疑, doubt) refers to 'ui' 擬 -- a comparison -- , as in the passage "A questionable sin, a light sentence [罪疑惟輕]."

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54) Eumbu (陰府).

## Part Two

### B. The Tradition

#### b.1 *Susin* (修身), Self-Cultivation

Every person was endowed with talents  
Which should be given full scope.  
We received the precepts guarding us against enticement  
And day and night should give expression to them.  
Let the children read and learn them by heart.

We choose literary composition and carefully examine (稽) our poems.  
According to one's age a person matures and deepens in thought, as  
These precepts gradually spread out from near to far.

*This passage means that the individual searches for and learns after the path of righteousness [正道]. Gye (稽) means a careful examination of that which appeals to reason.*

#### b.2 *Yonghae* (嬰孩), the Child

When one holds a newly born,  
At the moment it leaves the womb  
One gives milk lest it be hungry and cry;  
And one wraps it up in bundles.

If you wish the infant to be bright and virtuous  
It shall be the case to dishearten all defiled desires (慾).  
And if you wish to cleanse old-ingrained faults (夙譴)  
Baptism (濯沐) should be given at an early age.

*This passage explains that when a person is born into this world the wicked sprouts of evil have not been put forth, so it is said that one should be purified in an early age. Yok (慾) here implies selfish desires; suggyeon (夙譴) means original sin; hong (洪) means big and tangmok (濯沐), baptism [洗禮].*

#### b.3 *Yujong* (幼丁), the Youth

As the child grows old  
Deviating traditions disfigure it:  
Lies and deception (詭) overcast its humble bearing (嬰);  
Defilement (駭) and adulation veil the true heart.

Haughtiness heightens (克伐) itself endlessly.  
If one does not steer away from such a blind path (窘抑)  
An awareness of downfall (蟻墮) shall take hold:  
Why not take this moment and willingly exercise the Mean (庸)?

*In this passage the individual who grows old becomes gradually*

*immersed in faults. To disentangle oneself of evil is an easy task if only one would properly moderate one's deportment and stave off sin by looking for the one who can give redemption. Gwae (詭) means mendacity and cunningness; hae (駭), defilement. What frames up one's behaviour is called seup (襲) and that which is kept in utter secrecy is nik (匿). Geuk (克) expresses the idea of something being self-supporting, beol (伐) means magnification, while jong (縱) stresses self-indulgence. The word gun-eok (窘抑) means persecution and oppression, while gam (憾) means lamentation. Gi (機) alludes to a moment of transformation, sul (術), to strength and ability, and yong (庸), the performance [of the Mean].*

#### b.4. Sa (士), the Seonbi

Some scholars fool around and neglect their studies.  
They desert their writing desks and duties. Taking  
Pleasure (嗜) at the *gomungo*<sup>55) and at the brandishing swords, they  
Show contempt (侮) for what is heartfelt and sincere (愼篤).</sup>

Displaying a flair for corruption as government officials (尸爵)  
In vain (曠) they covet the blessings (佑) of Buddhist sacrifices.  
Like a band of Pharisees prone only to untold prattling:  
Under the bright light [of truth] they shall face ruin.

*The passage above explains that it is an eternal sin if those scholars, who are supposed to lead a life devoted to literary works, indulge themselves with the lute and the sword, thus longing for but not truly seeking the path of righteousness (正道). Gi (嗜) means to take pleasure in, mo (侮), indulgence and haughtiness [慢]; sindok (愼篤) denotes a heartfelt, sincere person [誠人]. One refers to a noble dead body (尸爵)<sup>56) as meaning the officials who do not fulfill their duties. Gwang (曠) implies nothingness [虛], and u (佑) means blessings [福].</sup>*

#### b.5 Nongsa-gun (農夫), the Farmers

The farmers busily toil the muddy fields and  
Do their best to secure a bountiful harvest.  
As the waters topple (灌) the fields they plant the rice (植)  
And pull out (昧) the weed only to get splashed with mud.

With absolute sincerity they earn the crops and store them in barns.  
But if they really intend to reap aplenty  
In apprehensive reverence (寅) they shall fear the last judgement (鞠).  
And pray on bent knees with their whole heart.

*The passage explains that after the hardships of toiling the land during the Spring, Summer and Autumn the farmers look forward to reaping*

55) A musical instrument.

56) The dead body (尸) also carries yet another meaning. In ancient times it would temporarily occupy the place of the god during a sacrificial ceremony.

*in abundance. However, in the event of their not yearning and searching for the true path [不求慕正道], they shall become tainted with sin for ever. One calls gwan (灌) the rising of waters and fertilising of the fields. Sik (植) means to drill seed; mae (昧), means to grab [摸, mak]; in (寅), respect and reverential fear, and guk (鞠) means judgement.*

#### b.6 Jang-in (匠人), Artisans

They measure with rulers and prune with axes (斤).  
And are proud of their ability.  
Bows, arrows, plates and jars  
The artisans shape them masterfully.

They are paid (泉刀) for the hard work,  
As they calculate the right price.  
But when the toil is finally over  
The artisans merely renew their strength  
And return to their labours.

*The passage means that if the artisans, who manufacture goods with expertise and make delicate objects, do not yearn and look for the path of righteousness, they shall incur eternal sin. Gun (斤) means axe; chondo (泉刀), money [knife-shaped copper coins].*

#### b.7 Sang-in (商人), the Merchants

People crowd (却) the market streets of the villages,  
Where the merchants buy and sell goods.  
They come out (迎) traversing mountain paths, islets, flat lands (坦),  
Rugged terrain (珂), rivers and the sea [to make a living.]

They frolic with money in their hands  
But they must always pay some "secret taxes".  
If someone fears thieves in their rich household  
They had better store up treasures in Heaven.<sup>57)</sup>

*The passage means that while the merchants traverse mountains and rivers and circulate the region to make a profit, if they do not yearn and look for the path of righteousness they shall incur eternal sin. Gak (却) means come loose; yeong (迎), to advance; dan (坦), a flat path, and ga (珂) means a rugged one [險].*

#### b.8 Jaegak (齊家), Governing the Family

It is praiseworthy looking after the family and its members.(戚)  
As it is to love one's brothers and sisters (昆玉).  
Honour your parents and show them filial piety;  
To help the unfortunate and the needy is one's moral obligation [惠].

Deeds of cruelty and inhumanness must cease:  
So treat your servants with compassion.

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57) Mt 6:20.

By preserving the human origin [根源]<sup>58)</sup>  
One shall enjoy peace and contentment.

*The passage explains that sincerity [誠] can be attained when an atmosphere of perfect harmony [和樂]<sup>59)</sup> and auspiciousness [祥]<sup>60)</sup> freely pervades the family.<sup>61)</sup> Cheok (戚) means the family; gonok (昆玉), brothers and sisters.*

#### b.9 Chiguk, (治國) Governing the Country

Let the wise and the enlightened (卜) be sought and called for (徵).  
Let them faithfully assume the reins of government;  
Insurrections will be quelled and thieves kept at bay.

Appointments are made with royal permission. Even though  
Administrative staffs [賓] and officials [吏] hide their misdeeds  
One (藐躬) should avoid incurring faults (孽)  
By keeping a clean consciousness.

A written answer to the king's call,  
One awaits (俟) and fulfills one's duty (奏職).  
How can one dislike [virtue] becoming bigger and wider?

*The passage means that by diligently serving the king, one's loyalty actualises the beauty of their sincerity [誠可嘉矣]. Bok (卜) means to*

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58) By "origin", Yi Byeok is inferring absolute sincerity (*chiseong*, 致誠) the beginning and end of all things. It is *chiseong* that perfects the "relation between father and son", or the "ties of affection" which are rooted in Nature (Heaven), as it appears in the *Classic of Filial Piety*, ch. 9. See, Legge's translation of the same, in *The Sacred Books of China*, vol. 3, 'The Hsiao King, or Classic of Filial Piety', Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1996. In the *RTAH* it is said that because the relation is not traced to its source, or 'root', "most people love their own sons differently from their brother's sons." They do not preserve *chiseong*. Cf. *RTAH*, VI:12 p. 176. J. Legge, trans. *Li Ki*, I, p. 365. The compound pictograph '*geunwon*' was first used by Choe Gwang (崔光), Wei country, who said that *chiseong* is the origin of all learning (此乃學者之根源).

59) Yi Byeok also presents sincerity as the atmosphere (氣) which surrounds the perfect and peaceful well-being of the family. As we pointed out in the General Introduction, in his study of the *EST* Yi Seong-bae associates the Kantian *Summun Bonnun* with sincerity. Although Kant's problematic concept of the highest good remains unbridgeable, Yi Byeok, we maintain, interprets human nature from dimly-perceived immanence, i.e., from the perspective that Heaven conferred human nature, which in turn reflexively -- in the wake of one's actualisation of sincerity -- "dimly" returns to Heaven. We shall see more about sincerity and dimly-perceived immanence in the following chapter.

60) The auspicious signs wrought about by absolute sincerity can be seen as happy omens which anticipate the flourishing of a nation or a family. Cf. James Legge, *The Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 24, p. 284. Sincerity is the source of a layered process which begins in expression, to continue in its being conspicuous, clear, moving others, changing others to finally transform them. Only those who are absolutely sincere can transform others. See also *SBCP*, p. 108.

61) Yi Byeok's opening sentence to this passage, "Acknowledge the beauty of the family (*gacheok ganseung* 嘉戚看承)" is here rephrased as meaning that it is sincerity which empowers its beauty. In the following passages the path of righteousness and sincerity are matched with loyalty (*chung* 忠) and devotion (*sin* 信).



search for [救]; jing (徵) means to call for; bin [賓], staff officers and i [吏], official clerks. Heun (鬩) signifies discord; makgeung (藐躬) is a metaphor for oneself [as the minor body of personhood, 藐小之躬]. Sa (俟) means to await the king's orders, and jujik (奏職), to do one's duty.

b.10 *Pyeongcheonha*, (平天下) Governing the World through Peace

A man climbs a steep mountain (崗磬) at dawn  
And crosses the vast sea (湖漢) at nightfall.  
[The sick and infirm] he cares for and prolongs their lives (延緩)  
In an emergency (需) he feeds the hungry,

And lifts up whatever has grown tortuous (偏).  
He firmly rebuilds the collapsed earthen pathway.  
In order to pacify the times  
It is necessary to clean the waste land (蕪) and uproot the weed.

*The passage above explains that whomever does good keeps away from a tortuous path. Their compassion [慈] and moral obligation [惠] are the manifestations of the beauty of sincerity [誠可嘉矣]. Gangban (崗磬) means a steep mountain; hohan (湖漢), vast waters. Ga (鰓) means a long life by providing medicine to the sick, curing them and thus prolonging their life. Su (需) means an emergency. In the event of general starvation one can relieve a year of famine by supplying food. Pyeon (偏) means that in due course world affairs become infirm. Mu (蕪) signifies debasement.*

b.11 *Seong*, (誠) Sincerity

In being sincere one makes a solemn oath (密盟)  
Glory and honour brightly manifest (赫);  
Observing how things fall and die  
One is overwhelmed by their abstruseness.

When people suffer innocently (橫羅),  
And the road to brilliance clogs up  
*Han* [恨] deeply penetrates (沈淪) and hides within the heart.  
What, then, shall become of the vile and cruel people (殘賊)  
[whose will is not sincere]?

*The above passage reiterates that there are three types of people whose sincerity is harmoniously expressed by the path of righteousness [誠合於正道矣]. But if someone does not yearn and look for the path of righteousness, they shall not be able to save their souls [靈魂]. Milmaeng (密盟) evokes the solemn oath one takes to heart; hyeok (赫), a brilliant manifestation. Hwoengna (橫羅) means to suffer innocently as one would take the path to hardship. Chimnyun (沈淪) means to sink and janjeok (殘賊) refers to iniquitous people.*

b.12 *Wonsu*, (怨讎) the Enemy

Malicious people are like vipers

Who swallow with their bodies after the fatal blow.  
They cheat others with their mellifluously insidious voice (售)  
And cruelly oppress them, as they flatter the powerful.

They play the ostentatious by shuffling responsibilities onto others.  
As the drum beat echoes their sin (鳴鼓) in the last days [慕季], some  
Shall drift away over the waters (濱), others reach the peak (崙):  
Why do people do not act with a sincere mind?

*The passage means that in the present age malicious people corrupt the good, but when the judgment comes in the last days Yaso shall denounce their sins. Bu (部) means a faction [a group of people]; su (售) refers to those who deceive others with a soft and seductive voice. Myeonggo (鳴鼓), the unveiling of sins; mogye (慕季), the last days. Bin (濱), waters; yun (崙) mountains. One ascends the mountain by drifting away from sin, through their own personal effort, for it is not something one can shuffle onto others.*

b.13 *Seong jeongsin* (誠的精神), Life of Reverential Sincerity

A house built (塔) high with planks, pillars and tiles:  
One can only take pride in its external shape.  
[Likewise] the trappings of the body  
Are nothing but external decorations.

If a dog goes wild and attacks its neighbour  
Its rage disappears after a while; but when  
Someone self-indulgently (放) exposes (裸) their dark intention  
Ridicule only shall they invite by bringing it into the open.  
Even the most magnificent house  
Is nothing but a dwelling place for the body.

The bull, the camel, the water buffalo and the elephant; the eagle  
And the lion that move in a peculiar, towering fashion (閃突)  
Are not but insects that fly swiftly (蘇) around a dark night's lamp,  
Blind as they are to its [true] brilliance.  
Let us then be ashamed of the myriad delusions of yore.  
And behold [truth] in reverence.

*The passage introduces a metaphor, comparing Yaso with a man who follows the path of righteousness. Thus all individuals understand and act on this superior awareness: it is wrong to think that the soul, like other forms of animal life, cannot be saved. Tap (塔) means a high house; bang (放), self-indulgence; na (裸), exposure or disclosure; som and dol (閃, 突) refer to a weird appearance [於狀怪異]. So (蘇), to something vibrant.*

b.14 *Yaso's Gotong*, (苦痛) Suffering

One must think of Yaso's nails and suffering  
His bodily lacerations and the final death. (殲)  
The crown of spikes on his head,  
The robe turned crimson on his flesh,

The merciless spanking he went through;  
The vinegar given to quench his thirst, and

His fibulae (腓骨) gradually bartered;  
But his love becoming ever greater, [despite his being put to death.]

He cautioned about the yeast [of the Pharisees and Herod's]<sup>62)</sup>  
Upon receiving the cup of torments he briefly recanted (遁)<sup>63)</sup>  
Like pigeons his followers all deserted him,  
And caught was he like a fish alive (射圍).

He bore a pierced sack patched up with hemp cloth.  
After cursing a fruitless tree  
He rode a donkey out through the Mount of Olives and (橄欖)  
Welcome was he by flutes (吹管) at Sun [邠] country.<sup>64)</sup>

*The passage shows that one must always remember that Yaso had experienced bitter suffering before ascending to Heaven and being glorified. If these instructions are kept throughout life, it will be possible to consistently entertain an attitude of devotion. To suffer and die is expressed by the pictograph som (殲). Bigol (腓骨) means the fibulae; dun (遁) means to avert [danger] and leave no vestige; sawi (射圍), to catch a live fish -- [as in the Chronicles of Lu's Spring and Autumn, 春秋隱公傳.] Gamnam (橄欖) is the name of a mountain; chwigwan (吹管), the sound of flutes.*

b.15 *Gyosa*, the Missionaries<sup>65)</sup>

The brave (勇) missionaries restore (振) the hungry  
And console the lonely;  
Forgive the penitent and liberate those who persist sinning (囚).  
By embracing the barbarians (苗系) --  
The people of Je (齊) and No (魯)<sup>66)</sup>--  
They behave like Yo (呂) and Gu (歐).

From remote regions (朔) to the very centre of the world (夏)  
They depended upon the polar star (斗)  
To arrive at their destinations.  
Winning over cold and hot weather they came  
And the limits of the globe (球) they reached.  
By depending on the latitude of the heavens (緯象).

*The passage explains that when [the Jesuits] transmitted Yaso's*

62) Mk 8:15.

63) Mt 22:42, Mk 14:36.

64) *Sun* country, a honour-bestowed land King Wen (文王) is associated with, i.e. the 'civilised world'. The virtue of King Wen is described in the *Book of Odes*, ode 241: "without awareness or knowledge, [he] followed the principle of the Lord." *RTAH*, XIV:1, p. 290.

65) Yi Byeok mainly refers to those Jesuit scholars and messengers of the Western Teaching who managed to enter China, of whom Matteo Ricci was obviously the prime mover.

66) *Je*, the land of Mencius; *No*, Confucius.

teachings, they did not shy away from hardships, but stood the cold and the heat to reach far-flung lands. Chin (振) means to restore what has fallen; yong (勇) refers to the individual of pluck who is penitent over their sin; su (囚), the person who however aware of sins does not repent; myogye (苗系 --, i.e. the barbarian inhabitants of the areas of Gwiju, 貴州, Unnam [雲南], Honam [湖南], collectively known as barbarian people 蠻族]. Yo (呂) refers to Yosang (呂尙); Gu (歐) to the brilliant Ku Yang Su [歐陽修, 1007-1072 C.E.] The remote northern land is called sak (朔), and China, ha (夏). Du (斗) means the polar star which guided the messengers; wisang (緯象), the latitude of heavens, and gu (球), the globe.

## Part Three

### C. Jayeolsi, (自烈時) Nature Poetry

#### c.1 *Haemo*, (楷模) the Principle of Creation

Footprints (迹) trace back to an eminent source (勳)  
[Whose original purity] is lost in defilement [of one's nature].  
[Unintentionally] one is thrown in the world  
Thus, one must search [攀] sincerely<sup>67)</sup>

And investigate the secret principles. (楷模)  
Even if entangled in a growth of wild grass (煩劇)  
One anticipates (冀) that the blind and the deaf  
Repent (懺) for their faults.

*The passage explains that after Sangju [上主] created Heaven and Earth, the vestiges of this creative process are the means to lead the people of the world through a heart of sincere commitment [誠信之心]. This sentence follows from a preceding one and also introduces the next. Chok (迹) means footprints, hun (勳), merit. Haemo (楷模), the principle of creation; beongeuk (煩劇) something which thrives in abundance; gi (冀), means anticipation and cham (懺), repentance.*

#### c.2 *Geon*, (乾) Heaven

Clear skies (嵐), a heat wave lingering on (繞繞)  
Heaven piles up layer by layer.  
The crepuscular sun illumines amidst the forest  
As a rainbow traverses the sky.<sup>68)</sup>

67) Yi Byeok plays with words in this passage as he quotes the Book of Odes, where a girl promises to lift her skirt and cross River Chin if the beloved reassures her of his love. See *Book of Odes* (詩經, 鄭風, 13), Seoul: Myeong Mundang, 1972, p. 156. Instead of using *geon* (褻, lift up), Yi Byeok preferred the same homophone but written differently, *geon* (攀, pull up).

68) Curiously, it appears that Yi Byeok is speaking of Heaven in terms of Chu Hsi's Neo-Confucian paradigm. In the *RTAH*, there is a discussion of *geon* (乾) which is said to constitute "the nature and feelings of Heaven... [*geon*] means strength... [what] is unceasing in its activity." (sec. 5). "Heaven" thus understood means "the heaven up there." (Chu Hsi, *Chu Tzu yü-lei*, 69:22a). Chu Hsi however admits that if one asks "Who is the master?", one can answer "Heaven itself" for there must be a master, but one "must see such a thing for himself. It is not something that can be fully explained in words." *RTAH*, p. 9.

A sudden stroke (迅) of lightning, thunders follow.  
White frost hangs on falling leaves;  
Bright times (暘), rainy days (霖); parched land (旱), the floods(潦).  
Ye, stand up and behold transformation-in-harmony (變調)!

*The passage says that Sangju's works are a testimony to Heaven's sundry manifestations. Nam (嵐) refers to heavens' atmosphere; yoyo (繞繞), the lingering surroundings. Sin (迅), something which occurs in a sudden; yang [暘], clear skies; eum (霖), a long-lasting rain. When rain does not come there is han, drought (旱); rain in excess, yo (潦). Byeon (變) means transformation, and jo (調), harmony.*

### c.3 Ji, (地) Earth

Consider (攷) the whole world (寰區) in detail (究):  
Things are long, short, wide and narrow in shape.  
Protuberant (凸) and hollow land (凹), unevenly rough pathways.  
Deep and recondite valleys frozen in stillness.

Uneven crossroads and shortcuts (崎嶇)  
Rivers and ponds (塹) encompassing  
This vast frontier -- There,  
Even the most recondite lies within.

*The passage illustrates how the earth in its immensity is said to the experience and the work of Sangju. Go (攷) means to investigate; gu (究), inquire in detail. Hwangu (寰區) are the four seas [the whole earth]. What rises high is cheol (凸), and what lies carved out is yo (凹). Gigu (崎嶇) means an uneven path; cham (塹) suggests a dugout, a pond created by nature [塹坑也江爲天塹].*

### c.4 Si, (時) Time

Was it morning just now as it strikes midday?  
Spring and autumn recoil in a moment. Twin bullets (雙丸)  
Though unmoved, ceaselessly travel (躑躅) in the sky  
While the days fade away and the nights reset their vigil.

The instant one contemplates the morning  
Everything flares up like fireworks. (熾燄燦燄)  
The march of heavenly bodies is measured with instruments (璣衡)  
But it suddenly comes (忽遽) and fades away (躑躅).

*This passage explains that time never stops [for it is always on march]. As spring and autumn fall back, so does human life. People realise this, so it is urgent to look for the eternal blessing [急求永福]. Ssanghwan (雙丸) means the Sun and the Moon; cheokchok (躑躅), one's proper course. Chiyeom sangnyu (熾燄燦疏), a metaphor for the swiftness of time; gihyeong (璣衡), means to measure time with instruments; chonggeo (匆遽), the sense or urgency; jeaju (躊躇), hesitation.*

c.5 *Sancheon*, (山川) Mountains and Streams

Mountain Tae, towering and majestic (岱嶽嶽疑).

River Ui (渭) running through a remotely wide setting (迢遞):

Meandering along high passes the waters come to the dock.

Upon climbing (陟), crossing the waters (涉) and reaching the peak

One can see the bluish mountains, like a chain of shells (排螺).

The sea-tide mounts and descends like *Cheollima*; (駛驪)<sup>69)</sup>

Mystical thoughts and memories of far-off times lighten up (臻):

The beauty of nature enthralles the mind.

*The passage explains that when someone contemplates the wondrous bearings of mountains and streams [nature], they should properly infer that [nature] is a magnificent work of Sangju. They should not neglect its beauty, neither become enthralled by its rewards. Daeak (岱嶽) is the name of a mountain. Geum-ui (嶽疑) means a mountain's towering shape. Wi (渭), the name of a river; choche (迢遞), something remote and vast. Cheok (陟), to climb and cross a mountain, seop (涉) the streams. Baera (排螺) suggests a cluster of mountain like shells. Sagi (駛驪), the sea-tides which come and go like Cheonllima. Jin (臻) means to actualise something.*

c.6 *Ingan*, (人間) Human Beings

The people: young and old.

If one finds amongst them an eminent soul (倜儻)

It should be recommended (薦), appointed (遴) and encouraged.

[Alas, one can only face] adulators (諂),

The arrogant (傲), the sardonic (譏), and derisive people (嘲)

Whose cleverish (預) looks betoken excellence and acumen.

But one must discern (晰) what is under their hair and skin.

69) Cheollima (千里馬), the thousand-li horse which covered a distance of one thousand li in just one day.



For the created (締) thread (縷) within one's heart,  
In its being abstruse, betokens a well (饒) of mystery.

*The passage explains that Sangju has not endowed the individual both with a spiritual capacity and a foolish nature by birth. Indeed, Sangju took great pains at creation, which is full of mystery. Hence, human beings cannot fathom it properly. Cheokdang (偶攬) means eminence; in (遴), to select; cheon (薦), to put forth. To be obedient to and flatter other people is conveyed by the pictograph cheom (諂). O (傲) means to scorn and gi (譏), to treat others with sarcasm. Jo (嘲) means derision; an (頡), 'cleverishness', as people are unable to distinguish between things. Nu (縷) means a thin thread. Seok (晰), to discern; che (締), to create and yo (饒), abundance.*

#### c.7 Migu, (楣構) the House

The splendid pavilion, its patterned corridors:  
A pair of stony stairway and windows on both sides (複);  
An intertwined (聯綿) railing around it;  
The exquisitely decorated silk windowpanes  
All converged in one place (輻輳).

[One peers through]

Ancestral rooms, the parlor, the waiting room, and the study (書塾),  
The granary, the kitchen, the toilet and the stable.  
All is well-matched (衍) and complete for the auspicious (休) fête,  
But the least speck (玷), and the house's foundation (楣構) is put to shame.

*In this passage even a splendid royal chamber shall put one to shame if the tiniest speck, upon stepping inside, is found. Hence, how come people do not search for purity of heart? Bok (複) means both sides; yeonmyeon (聯綿), to combine without end; pokju (輻輳), to converge in one place; yeon (衍) and a (透) both mean to be well-matched [延]. Hyu (休) means to be auspicious [吉祥]; jeom (玷), dirt; mi (楣), gate; and migu (楣構), the structure of the house.*

#### c.8 Ui, (衣) Clothes

One wears hemp clothes, fur, arrow-root fabric and ramie.<sup>70)</sup>

70) *Book of Odes* (詩經, *Junam* [周南] Gyeongdam [絺草]), Seoul: Myeong Mundang, 1972, p. 37. In the *Odes*, the passage reads, 爲絺爲綌.

A hairpin, earrings, a broach and rings.  
One dresses up with embroidered silk garments  
Whose brilliance muddles the eyes.

People take pride in their silk sleeves;  
As flamboyance wraps up the body.  
But until death presses on in old age  
In vain shall they dress up and cling to bodily ornaments.

*This passage explains that clothes should be pretty so as to make people's appearance attractive. However, while one should seek to save one's soul and enjoy eternal blessings [永福], people are nevertheless strongly attached to their external trimmings. They had better think, with a sense of urgency, about the precious treasure [bogwi 寶貴] which lies within.*

#### c.9 *Kimul*, (器物) Instruments

One peruses the ritual plates and evaluates (覈) them. (觚)  
Instruments are useful objects [in daily life].  
One lays in a wooden bed. (榻)  
[And] for morning and evening meals spoons are used.

[With a whip] one hits the air (塵) and draws the bridles on a horse;  
[Holding] a brush one writes, and cuts paper (楮) with a knife.  
Whoever gathers all sorts of things properly  
Knows how to keep them in order. (臚署)

*The above passage argues that instruments [器物] are made according to usage. Although people realise this fact, they ought to practice sudeok [修德]<sup>71)</sup> for the sake of Sangju, for it is a precious instrument [重器]. Haek (覈) means to investigate and experience; go (觚), an instrument's shape; jin (塵), to whip; joe (楮), a piece of paper; yeoseo (臚署), the next in order.*

#### c.10 *Choechan*, (璀璨) Jewelry

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71) Yi Byeok seemed to be reasonably aware of the Catholic notion of ascetism -- 修德主義. However, he did not neglect the traditional virtue the *seong-in* must cultivate or 'pull up' (養), i.e. search: the "purity of heart" (c.7) where all actions and self-conversions ought to stem from within, from the "same [self-expending] nature." The beauty of *sudeok* -- a precious instrument -- implies a debarking of one's nature under the Other, similar to the way Yaso is portrayed in the *EST*. *Sudeok* thus cultivated by the *seong-in* reflexively returns to the Source, the Spirit, itself self-expenditure, thus expressed by Yi Byeok: "You and I are both of the same nature." (a.1).

Small pearls [咫], large gems:  
Green jade, red coral;  
Loyang's (洛陽) bells and Sichuan's small [Buddhist] handbell (泗磬);  
The bronze bowl of Chin (秦), an incense burner of Tang (唐);

Beautiful precious stones, dark-red embers. (琳瑯琥珀)  
Agate, (瑪瑙) and rubies (賦球). Their brilliance (璀璨)  
Dazzles like the sight of steep mountains (崢嶸),  
But what one cherishes is the value veiled [韜] within.

*This passage says that rare precious stones are similar to Seongdo, the Sage's Path [聖道]. While gems are tucked away in a locker, Seongdo sits down in the heart. It should be carefully cherished as an eternal treasure. Ji (咫) alludes to the eight types of [lesser] relationships. Loyang's [洛陽] bell is the most precious copper bell; as is a handbell. Innanghogu (琳瑯琥珀) means beautiful stones, manoemubu (碼碯砮砮) are all precious stones. Jaeng-yeong (崢嶸), means a steep rugged mountain; choechan (璀璨), the gleam of precious stones, on (韜), to conceal.*

#### c.11 Gaengjang, (鏗鏘) Music

The sound of wind and string instruments  
The beating (拊) blasts off in time to the music (蕭韶),  
As the melody (鏗鏘) beautifully flows:  
Imnyeong (淋鈴), a happy tune, and the dolefully sweet yeolbek (裂帛);

Streams springing forth (湍激), reverberating steep mountains (峯廻):  
Thundering sounds intercalating with delicately minute rhythms,  
All attuned harmoniously.  
What a shame if people cannot play (濫芋) these instruments.

*The passage alludes to the five musical notes. If one cannot harmonise them, there can be no beautiful music. Comparatively, while the Sage Teaching [聖教] is spread, good cannot be practised if people, near and far, do not trust each other by not realising the Path. Soso (蕭韶) is the name of an old song. Bu (拊) and mu (撫) are similar musical instruments. Gaengjang (鏗鏘) means a musical rhythm. Imnyeong (淋鈴), a happy melody; yeolbaek (裂帛) a sad tune. Dangyeok (湍激), the quick flow of waters; bonghoe (峯廻), the appearance of a mountain is a metaphor for the twining together of the quick and slow sounds of a melody. Nam-u (濫芋) refers to the person who cannot play [court*

music] wind instruments.

c.12 *Hwamok*, (花木) Flowers and Trees

[As a woman] who massages and powders  
Her face, does her hair and eyebrows,  
So is the beauty and elegance of flowers [and plants]  
The charming eyebrow-shaped leaves of the weeping willows  
The dark green of the paulownia trees.

Peach and apricot flowers bloom in the warmth;  
The common pine and the white pine overcome winter:  
A new scenery unfolds as the seasons go by,  
Meanwhile, the garden becomes a sweet, joyful [酣] place throughout.

*The passage means that the beauty of flowers and trees last for a moment, since Sangju already endowed them with that lovely appearance. Human life, however, lasts about a century, for Sangju desired to create it, drunk with joy, for eternity. Gam (酣), the pleasant feeling one gets after drinking] means being joyful, chang [暢].*

c.13 *Yache*, (野菜) Vegetables

One has tasty food till the stomach is full (飫).  
A cultivated field (藝) provides vegetables aplenty;  
One picks cucumber and fern brake;  
One boils mallow for soup, sprinkles mustard

And picks and cleans scented plants.  
The more one chews the tastier they get.  
Why shall we hunger for smelly raw meat (腥羶)  
[Once] we have heaped up good food abundantly?

*The passage explains that vegetables, which keep one's health, are tasty and people enjoy them. Hence it is not necessary to have raw meat as a side dish. Originally, the Sage Teaching -- the Path of Righteousness [正道] -- has in all ages stamped out sin and rescued souls. It is not worthwhile revering other shin [Spirit, 神] even if there are many people who do. O (飫) means to have the stomach full; ye (藝) to cultivate; seongjon (腥羶), the flesh of birds and other animals.*

c.14 *Josu*, (鳥獸) Birds and Beasts

Auspicious signs appear and fill [the world]:  
The phoenix flies (翥) and the *kylin*<sup>72)</sup> gets about.(遨)  
A splendid horse runs all over the earth;  
The heron and the crane fly in the sky.

The chickens are in the shack and the pigs, caged.  
Wild ducks frolic on the water, the magpies in their nest.  
For each there is food in abundance (敷豫),  
So why should we worry about what to eat?

*The passage means that birds and beasts, however little, can live and be sustained by the food Sangju provides. But human beings, why do they worry about what to wear and what to eat -- as if these would not be enough? Joe [翥] means to fly; O (遨), to stroll around and buye (敷豫), be enough.*

c.15 *Oeryu*, (魚類) Fish

Fish and clam multiply so quickly (蕃滋).  
It is hard to tell their species:  
Giant turtle, tortoise, terrapin and crocodile  
Big fish (鯢), whale and alligator...

On the water the grasshopper becomes shrimp (淬),  
So does (涸) the sparrow which becomes shellfish.  
The fish lay eggs in profusion and  
Within days they take a sudden leap; (俄頃)  
[though without splashing a soul].

*The passage explains that there is a profusion of fish and clam, but they do not possess a soul. Their existence is ephemeral, whilst human life, very important. How can there be any comparison between fish and human, if the latter should be thought as sheltering a soul? Boenja (蕃滋) means a large group; swisu (淬涸), to fall in the water. The grasshopper falls in the water and becomes a shrimp, the sparrow into big waters and turns out a shellfish.<sup>73)</sup> Agyeong (俄頃) means a brief instant.*

c.16 *Masochung*, (蟻小蟲) Tiny Insects

72) *Kylin* (麒麟), in Chinese thought, a mythological creature.

73) This is in reference to a passage in the *Book of Rites* (禮記, 月令 *wolyeong*).

Silkworms and spiders pull out a silk cord (組);  
The crawling worm moves and the cicada sings on the tree.  
Insects build their place in dark spots,  
In the nook of a lovely garden they weave.

If one throws scraps of meat (醬), ants soon cling to them;  
Flies noisily (閔) fight one another around a lump of rice;  
Fruit flies (麼) come and go, buzzing away in an instant.  
Without realising (忖) the misery (凄) and hardships (辛) [of life].

*This passage explains that worms and small creatures enjoy but a brief existence. Since they have no awareness, they do not know kan, sorrow [艱]. Human life, however, is extremely important: if one loses sight of salvation what shall become of their suffering? Hence, people should keep a heart of devotion [信心 sinsim] in order to overcome human misery -- even if the initial rearing of sinsim be hardened by suffering. Jo (組) means to pull out; yeon (醬), small fragments, as when ants cling to scraps of meat. Hong (閔), means a noisy vibration; ma (麼), a tiny insect. Pu (忖) means to think; choe (凄) and sin (辛) both allude to hardships and suffering.*

#### c.17 Sa, (死) Death

Hence, do ye worship with sincerity and be obedient (懇勉肅雍)  
[For no one knows] whether death  
Suddenly comes in young or old age (塲殂).  
The body (軀殼) is not a steely armour;  
The smallest [unwitting] transgression (眚慝) and the heart gets anxious.  
  
Tears fill the eyes and sorrow grows deeper (悚惶).  
One should always keep company,  
And exert oneself for the study and inquire [into mystical matters]  
As if fearing the nearing day of decomposition and malodour.

*The passage explains that the individual should look for the Path ardently, by observing the rites [禮]. Since death approaches inexorably, people must venerate with sincerity and fight against sin and evil, as if fearing the eventual day of decay and its malodour, thus caring not to lose their souls. Minmyeon (懇勉) means an ardent search; suk (肅), to venerate sincerely; ong (雍), benign obedience. An early death is conveyed by the pictograph sang (殤) and death at old age, jo (殂). Gugak (軀殼) mean: the body; saeng (眚) unwitting transgression; teuk (慝), to do away with evil. Songhwang (悚惶), a fearsome appearance.*

c.18 *Jiphui*, (緝熙) Weaving Brilliance<sup>74</sup>

How much more so should we heed what is vast (浩蕩),  
Widely flourishing (喧奕) and boundless,  
Weaving Brilliance (緝熙), the unfathomable (淵穆), and  
Thus glimpse the Face of the Creator.

One falls prostrated on bent knees.  
Shame and resentment shall be all eradicated (慙懟胥刪):  
By attending Heaven with reverential shame (僞使踧蹐)  
One shall gradually restore (梭) spiritual ignorance (冥頑).

*This passage explains that Sangju's virtue [上主之德] is immense and incomparable - His works are plainly manifest. Thus, people should reflect about it in a deep manner. They should pray prostrated, and thus realise Sangju's virtue and work. This way, the evil-natured heart will be restored through sincere reverence and the inspiration of the holy spirit [恭順感受聖靈]. The previous state of ignorance [自改其前日之冥頑] should be repented for and personally amended. Hotang (浩蕩) means extensiveness; hwonhyeok (喧奕), to become widely known and flourishing. Jiphui (緝熙), [weaving] brilliance; yeonmok (淵穆), means depth. Dae (懟), refers to resentment; san (刪), to eradicate; guru (僞使), to venerate in person and be circumspect; chukjeok (踧蹐) also means being reverent and circumspect. Myeong-wan (冥頑), a condition where one falls short of spirituality [不靈] and jeon (梭), means to restore.*

c.19 *Yasojido*, (耶穌之道) Yaso's Path

Those who forcefully commanded (策掣) their loyal subjects  
Were Kings U (禹), Tang (湯), Yeo (堯) and Sun (舜).

74) In his explanation at the end of this verse, Yi Byeok noted that "*jiphui*" is "that which is brilliant" (緝熙光明也). But the compound pictograph he used to express "brilliance", and which he had to exegete, is most unusual. *Jip* is not a pictograph one can normally compound with brilliance (*hui*). The former literally means "to accumulate", to "gather", "to connect" and to "weave". Insofar as he speaks of boundlessness and the unfathomable, *Sangje* is also depicted as 'Brilliance' that weaves itself into human affairs, hence "weaving Brilliance." But Yi Byeok conceived of a heavenly endowment imparted from and which must reflexively return to Heaven through the *seong-in*'s self-virtue, or realisation through personal experience. This imparted Brilliance is therefore 'connected'; it 'accumulates' or weaves through *sudeok* as a thread, much in the same way Confucius saw a thread running through his teaching. It is in this sense that we have qualified "that which is brilliant" as 'weaving Brilliance.' For the basic Neo-Confucian concept of realisation through experience, see *RTAH*, p. 368.



Those who illuminated Confucianism's laws while abiding by them  
Were the sages Chung (仲), Min (閔), Kung (孔) and Meng (孟):<sup>75)</sup>

They set sincerity and true simple-heartedness<sup>76)</sup>  
Apart from luxury (奢順) and thus established clear (甄) principles.  
[In the last days] Fire shall consume [evil]  
Thus, one should pray with an ardent heart (撫膺敏懇).

*This passage means that Yaso's path and his teaching can guide the people in the service of the king, by fostering a heart of rectitude thus making the will sincere [正心誠意]. One should reflect whether this path [道] is truthful or not. Those who follow it rigorously can distinguish its standard, for it is a awesome thing not to preserve it -- lest one face the eternal fire [永火].<sup>77)</sup> First and foremost one should reflect absolute sincerity towards Sangje. Chaek (策) means to use force; gyeol (掣), to lead; sa (奢) signifies exuberance and sycophancy; sun (順) means purity and simplicity. Gyeon (甄), something clear and distinct; and eung (膺) refers to the heart.*

*Yi Byeok's Note: Sangje, throughout history, reveals Himself as a human being perfected in humankind's concrete living conditions.*

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75) The passage implies that Confucianism's laws were clearly inspired by Chung (仲) and Min Tzu-chian (閔子騫) and subsequently transmitted according to the teachings of Confucius and Mencius.

76) A clear reference to the *Book of Odes*, ode 256. Chan quoted thus: "Mildness and reverence/ Are the foundation of virtue." Cf. *RTAH*, V: 40, p. 169.

77) According to Neo-Confucianism, what distinguishes the human endowment from the animal's, is "nothing but the Principle of Nature [Heaven]. If [man] cannot preserve it, how can he remain a man?" Cf. *RTAH*, IV: 26, p. 134. Yi Byeok naturally interprets *T'ien-li* (天理) in a *sudeok*-informed, reflexive way which distinguishes "humankind's concrete living conditions," as he concludes at the end of the *EST*.

# 聖教要旨

讀天學初函  
李曠庵藁  
作註記之

Part I

a.1

未生民來  
前有上帝  
惟一真神  
無聖能比

六日力作  
先闢天地  
萬物多焉  
既希且異

遂辦和土  
掬爲靈矣  
命處賜臺  
千百皆與

復使宜家  
女兮往事

謂之曰夫  
爾我如自

凡所求者  
毋不立豫  
然欲善惡  
勿聽手取

告云可食  
或當見耳  
聞言摩掌  
得罪因此

右節記上主造物之  
多新以備人之用也  
人奈何犯其禁令  
而自取罪戾哉。

a.2

口傳亞伯  
羊祭信心  
長子若兄  
敵殺及今

以致彼族  
但安利名  
愛身尼色  
列馬羅金

父意非昔  
其僕已明  
卽由是時  
大水四行

券撒全死  
何問儕羣  
第歸方蓋  
則同義人

居七從八  
各拉入門

右節記世人之犯禁  
墮惡殘殺貪暴造孽  
日深所以洪水橫行  
上主賓惡其污穢也  
非有義人則人類幾  
絕滅矣尼曠也僕謂  
挪亞也方蓋方舟也  
居人者挪亞眷屬共  
有八人從八者所有  
携潔畜牝牡各八也

a.3

故又督教  
甚加世福

降下耶穌  
斯實救主  
等間于三

倫出於五  
華年至殿  
在會受書  
相約衆士

必知理數  
節禮守法  
司十二徒  
冷邊城邑

巴米道路  
猶太國也  
西乃山乎  
王而溫雅  
後章昭諸

右節記上主降  
救之故蓋深憫世  
人迷於惡途不能  
自救故特降下愛  
子爲萬世之救主  
也等間于三者耶  
穌在三位之中居  
於第二也倫出於

五者耶穌雖爲神  
子而出世誕育於  
人也

a.4

親營皮幕  
赦過拯逃  
蒙選代贖  
聲稱益高

備歷苦難  
顯成功勞  
追厥本初  
垂訓汝曹

右節總冒下文此章  
之綱領也幕喻身也  
見彼得後書

a.5

母氏瑟妻  
少小待字  
蓮容素端  
蘭性較細

會緣蒙感  
忽產男嗣

同界友師  
軍光詳視

造室辱臨  
伏拜依次

右節記耶穌出世之  
初天卽垂象而先顯  
示於人世軍光星光也

a.6

后皇最忍  
按戶戮刑  
挪負投遠  
避境藏形

治君卒沒  
率眷返止  
仍恐勒召  
夜深脫去

畜老革荒  
龍現首舉  
免歟幸哉  
原靡終始

右節記耶穌嬰時遭  
害備極苦難而始得  
安全也荒空也畜老  
則手脫而皮空喻希  
律既髦而行惡也  
龍謂耶穌也

拜 令 俯 望  
尊 崇 强 施  
修 德 圖 報  
正 直 兩 虛  
奉 諭 遵 遣  
焉 敢 惑 余

a.7

向 野 翰 呼  
悔 改 務 切  
就 洗 河 旁  
循 儀 莫 越

右節記耶穌見視之  
日爲魔所逼而守正  
不阿故魔卒離之而  
去也

a.9

譬 樹 結 果  
適 口 維 悅  
否 悉 刃 斷  
便 付 焚 烈

乘 驢 歡 樂  
總 集 智 愚  
條 誠 張 布  
宰 治 屬 吾

右節記耶穌受洗之  
事河約但河也越過也

攻 擊 速 逆  
常 聚 俊 英  
旨 斥 氣 責  
隱 暗 畢 陳

a.8

嘗 遇 魔 試  
指 餅 爭 遺  
押 登 宮 屋  
崇 垣 被 攜

患 遭 獄 陷  
謀 亡 沙 洲  
統 轄 的 裔

征途遍周

花嫩易敗

麥掃定留

類反鳥獸

穀養弗憂

失懼災絕

好甲難俱

仇怒所據

兵奪車驅

孰忘足畏

頓害體魂

該恃庇釋

藉謝思仁

右節記耶穌宣道之

時多言譬喻以教人

也獄訟也悖教者謀

訟耶穌避去也的裔

以色列之民也嫩嬌

好之類也好甲猶好

兵也

a.10

學別派支

埃田許置

敬妄良分

詛禁祝極

海于哥弟

棄業速起

履武請隨

願離鄉里

目紀矜恤

志揚讚美

默記祈文

通達古史

邦都省京

南北半經

每念僭偽

化導平情

燔牡割肉

舊例雖存

羔牛特犢

錫獻豈欣

私顛公憐

葡萄飲傾

開堂誠勸

引證宣音

右節記耶穌立教之

正改舊禮而用新禮  
也武足跡割肉割禮  
也

a.11

著語貴喻  
奇略更接  
顧種牧傷  
夕朝歲月

鬼逐病醫  
污解禍滅  
葬墓寢興  
捫衣婦潔

詣船波面  
息風舟底  
愈疾環觀  
活喪待喜

助罕賴他  
審判咸己  
罰犯賞援  
重權獨任

固保盛盈  
桓懷恭順  
外暴內愆

庶幾戰勝  
右節記耶穌行奇之  
多所以表其權能也  
種種類牧喻耶穌也

a.12

散編賽說  
錄久兆伊  
毀宇再建  
預計末期

廢園吉壤  
頌對誰欺  
街歌谷應  
俾讓九思

右節記耶穌預言之  
確即可信其無所不  
知矣賽以賽亞古之  
預言者也末期末日  
也九思君子之成德  
見論言引之以譽耶  
穌也

a.13

工役貧富  
左右近交



餘論尤服  
班旅盡招

動偕新娶  
香供酒邀  
執油膏坐  
流血悶號

右節記耶穌臨終之  
慘皆所以救萬世之  
人也

a.14

慧雨慈雲  
震角播示  
背架築壇  
納匱載器

察貨度銀  
赤白用給  
提要發綱  
合享永位

宗性單微  
祖孫答述  
共獲濟進  
誓乏哀哭

偶像阿回  
銅鐵石木  
創識破淫  
尙議變俗

右節記說教勸世之  
切言耶穌既已捨身  
爲人以救萬世人自  
當心悅誠服盡其分  
以待審判奈何崇事  
偶像而不變易未風  
俗哉角籥也匱耶和  
華之約匱淫淫祀

a.15

啓穴屍甦  
凌空升昇  
寶座或憑  
訟詞迫具

辜咎疑輕  
雪冤難巨  
覺昧程迷  
陰府底拒

右節言耶穌升天之  
後萬事事皆待之而  
鞫也凌騰也昇與舉

同疑擬也與尙書罪  
疑惟輕同義

Part II

b.1

量才託授  
衛翼扶持  
詔戒誘誨  
晝晚鑑茲

兒輩謳誦  
賦擇詩稽  
齒牙申講  
遐邇均推

右節言人當勤學以  
求正道也稽考求也

b.2

爰監嬰孩  
胎元誕育  
急乳泣饑  
席臥綿束

秉質清聰  
概除雜欲  
夙譴洪沾

盍早濯沐

右節言人初生之時  
惡孽未萌惟早當洗  
滌耳欲私欲夙譴原  
罪也洪大也濯沐洗  
禮也

b.3

幼丁漸壯  
習染殊童  
詭謙襲貌  
駭笑匿哀

克伐驕縱  
窘抑困窮  
倘憾墮落  
機術奚庸

右節言人外齒既長  
習染漸深易墮惡途  
故當謹防而求救者  
詭詐也駭驚也飾外  
爲襲中藏爲匿克能  
也伐誇大縱放肆窘  
抑窘迫而屈抑也憾  
恨也機機變術權術  
庸用也

b.4

博嗜簡篇  
几筵勤讀  
琴劍遄遊  
專侮慎篤

尸爵曠官  
貪祐祀佛  
口法喇口賽朋<sup>1)</sup>  
輪傾鑒覆

右節讀書之人琴劍  
遊任情妄作苟不求  
慕正道則永為罪人  
叨矣嗜好也侮慢也  
慎篤誠篤之人也在  
官不盡其職曰尸爵  
曠虛也祐福也

b.5

泥塗奔走  
竊認農耕

澤灌烟植  
抹露茂塵

郊場收穡  
繼蹟厚豐  
疇想寅鞠  
曲跪虔尋

右節農家者流三時  
辛苦希冀豐收苟不求  
慕正道則永為罪人矣  
以水沃田曰灌植也抹  
摸也寅敬惕鞠審判

b.6

操尺運斤  
係誇傑步  
弓矢皿科  
精粗製鑄

酬值竭償  
泉刀還互  
苟悟了休  
連番趨赴

右節工匠之儔鉤心  
鬪角作為奇巧不求  
慕正道則永為罪人

1) Yi Byeok is referring to the Pharisees, to whom the *seonbi* are disparagingly compared. The pictographs above for the transliterated expression (in italics) is not available in the regular software program used for the present *EST*. Therefore, the radical "mouth" (口) had to be manually inserted.

矣斤斧也泉刀錢也

b.7

市隅井際  
買賣客商  
却迎巖島  
坦珂江洋

倍億典掌  
貢稅殷繁  
錢滿慮攘  
駐庫穹蒼

右節行商居賈跋涉  
山川權營子母苟不  
求慕正道則永為罪  
人矣却退也迎進也  
坦平路珂險途

b.8

嘉戚看承  
昆玉姊妹  
純孝爺憐  
卑弱佑惠

刻薄肇衰  
憐惜奴婢

普護根源  
康寧允慰

右節一室之內和氣  
祥能如此者其孝友  
誠可嘉矣戚眷屬也  
昆玉兄弟也

b.9

卜賢徵哲  
荷政輸忠  
俘叛禦盜  
驗印頒封

賓吏阻蔽  
斲詰藐躬  
俟駕奏職  
曷厭寬宏

友節任君之事鞠躬  
盡瘁能如此者其忠  
盡誠可嘉矣卜救卜  
徵聘也賓慕中之客  
吏書役也斲隙也藐  
躬藐小之躬自喻也  
俟主之駕奏職盡己  
之分

b.10

崗 磬 晨 屆  
湖 漢 星 遷  
延 嘏 樂 送  
需 饑 糧 捐

偏 側 陸 奠  
圯 壤 岸 堅  
那 肯 鬪 隙  
蕪 穢 侵 牽

右節爲善之人不存  
歧視能如此者其慈  
惠誠可嘉矣崗磬山  
之高者湖漢水之廣  
者嘏壽也送樂以却  
病則壽可延需急也  
捐糧以急饑則荒可  
濟偏側物壞而不正  
也蕪汚也

b.11

謹 恪 密 盟  
譽 賞 似 赫  
轉 眼 崩 薨  
驚 覩 幽 黑

戾 綱 橫 羅  
昌 衢 閉 塞  
抱 恨 沈 淪  
沉 兼 殘 賊

右節此三等人能盡  
其分誠合於正道矣  
惟不求慕正道則不  
能自救其靈魂密盟  
盟之於心也赫顯赫  
也橫羅無辜而蹈禍  
也沈淪陷溺也殘賊  
凶暴之人

b.12

邪 當 毒 蛇  
領 部 吞 噬  
舌 蜜 售 甘  
燬 虜 倚 勢

嫁 怨 仗 威  
鳴 鼓 暮 季  
濱 退 崙 逾  
奈 寡 頂 替

右節今之牙當橫行  
荼毒善類至末日之  
審判耶穌必討其罪  
也部黨類也售甘言  
以誘人也鳴鼓聲其  
罪也暮季末世也濱  
水之涯也崙山之道  
善退惡皆己自主無  
預替者也

忙 愧 錯 差  
仰 慕 觀 附

右節借譬以喻耶穌  
之道人人皆當遵行  
不可若無靈之物不  
思得救也塔高屋也  
放縱也裸露也閃突  
形狀怪異也蘇活也

b.13

板 柱 瓦 塔  
槿 彰 樣 制  
帶 繫 怕 懸  
零 珍 表 飾

狂 犬 虐 鄰  
剛 忿 姑 遜  
放 膽 裸 腹  
毛 髮 謗 刺

房 舍 樓 屋  
只 堪 住 宿  
牲 駝 犀 象  
禽 閃 獅 突

移 磨 蘇 蟲  
燃 燈 照 瞽

b.14

屢 憶 釘 痛  
竟 殲 戈 鋒  
棘 冠 頭 戴  
袍 片 搖 紅

翦 枝 撻 打  
渴 擬 鹽 充  
腓 骨 慢 折  
寵 壽 旋 增

嚴 防 假 醉  
暫 辭 慄 杯  
鬻 鴿 遁 院  
捕 魚 射 圍

襄 紼 麻 補  
菓 咒 葉 肥

索 騎 橄 欖  
到 郇 管 吹

右節常憶耶穌受害  
之酷升天之榮而稽  
其生平之言行固在  
在可堅信心也被害  
而死曰殲腓骨脛骨  
也遁避去也射圍矢  
魚之戲見春秋隱公  
傳橄欖山名吹管吹  
菰也

b.15

振 枯 援 單  
宥 勇 伸 囚  
苗 系 齊 魯  
品 格 呂 歐

朔 夏 盤 蹈  
核 斗 辨 州  
暨 寒 迄 熱  
曳 杖 緯 球

右節此言傳道之教  
師伸說耶穌之道險  
阻不辭寒暑不問固  
欲普救世人同享永

福也振起落也勇猛  
於悔改者也囚知罪  
而未伸也苗系猶苗  
裔也呂呂尙歐歐陽  
修能文善武者也極  
北曰朔中華曰夏斗  
北斗夜行不知所向  
則鑒北斗以辨之緯  
象緯天之度也球地  
球地之體也

### Part Three

c.1

緬 迹 遡 勳  
儘 鮮 缺 漏  
擲 界 某 儔  
拏 裳 參 叩

楷 模 秘 探  
煩 劇 暢 茂  
殆 冀 贖 聲  
僉 懺 誤 謬

右節鑒上帝創造之  
迹以啓世人誠信之  
心承上章以起下文



也迹迹象勳功勞楷  
模之有定者也煩劇  
繁多冀望也懺悔也

c.2

晴嵐繞繞  
瞻矚層霄  
霞輝林豔  
霓彩渡消

迅雷奮響  
疎霜催凋  
暘霽旱潦  
竚觀變調

右節就天可見者以  
驗上主之功有如此  
嵐天之氣也繞繞迴  
環也汎疾也久晴曰  
暘久雨而災爲旱多  
雨而災爲潦變和變  
調調理

c.3

攷究寰區  
長短闊狹  
凸凹崎嶇  
幽燕崖峽

悞岐徑抄  
併程塹劃  
盪疆拓與  
蠻貊包刮

右節就地之廣大者  
以驗上主之功有如  
此攷考同究察也寰  
區四海之內高出爲  
凸低下爲凹崎嶇路  
不平也塹坑也江爲  
天塹

c.4

辯辰訝午  
驟閱春秋  
雙丸躑躅  
晷逝彰浮

靜占晏曉  
熾燄燦硫  
璣衡驗算  
忽遽踏躄

右節時序運行不息  
少縱卽歷春秋人宜  
知光陰之忽促而急  
求永福也雙丸日月

也躑躅行貌熾硫喻  
時過之速也璣衡璇  
璣玉衡所以占測者  
也忽遽促迫也躊躇  
猶豫不決之貌

c.5

岱嶽嶽嶷  
渭川迢遞  
鑿險覓津  
陟涉攀躋

嶂翠排螺  
潮黃駛驥  
玄幻巧臻  
佳玩攸寄

右節山川之奇幻其  
見匠心人當推上主  
功能勿徒羨佳玩之  
寄也岱嶽泰山名山  
之宗也崑嶽嶷聳立  
貌渭水名迢遞闊也  
登山口陟履水曰涉  
排螺言諸山排列如  
螺也駛驥潮來迅急  
如驥之駛也臻至也

c.6

髻僮耆耆  
倜儻俠豪  
遴薦勵獎  
諂傲譏嘲

顛預伶俚  
縷晰膚毫  
胞胚配締  
妙奧頗饒

右節上主生人靈蠢  
不一而締造苦心實  
有奧妙非人之所能  
測也倜儻卓立也遴  
選也薦進也順人而  
阿附曰諂凌人而蔑  
視之曰傲微諷以刺  
人曰譏曲言以笑人  
曰嘲預言愚蠢之人  
辦事無眉目也縷細  
絲也晰分也締造也  
饒多也

c.7

畫榭雕廊  
複堦夾牖

斐 檻 聯 緜  
綺 窗 輻 輳

齋 塾 序 庠  
廩 廚 廁 廡  
衍 慶 迓 休  
恥 玷 楣 構

右節宮室華美承門  
祚者猶恥玷汚人奈  
何不求心之清潔哉  
復重也聯緜連接不  
斷也輻輳聚集也衍  
延迓延也休吉祥也  
玷汚也楣門楣構堂  
構

c.8

葛 裘 絺 綌  
簪 珥 鐲 環  
錦 披 繡 佩  
燦 爛 輝 煌

銜 耀 襟 袖  
掩 映 副 鑲  
耄 齡 限 促  
遑 戀 裝 潢

右節服飾僅美外觀  
救靈必享永輻何以  
戀在外之裝潢而不  
急在內之寶貴乎

c.9

覈 觚 評 村  
借 資 佐 輔  
睡眠 榻 牀  
饗 殮 匕 筋

揮 塵 挽 韁  
吮 筆 裁 楮  
妥 貯 穩 儲  
般 件 臚 署

右節人造器物以適  
己用何不修德爲主  
上之重器哉覈驗也  
觚器之有稜者也塵  
拂塵也楮紙也臚署  
次序也

c.10

寸珠咫壁  
責衍丹瑚  
洛鐘泗磬  
泰鼎唐鑪

琳瑯琥玖  
碼碯砮砮  
崢嶸璀璨  
韞孕含娛

右節珍奇之物猶聖道也珍奇秘於庫藏聖道寓於人心含孕韞藏尚其永寶八寸曰咫洛鐘銅鐘之寶貴者泗磬石磬之能浮者琳瑯琥玖美玉之名碼碯砮砮皆寶石也崢嶸高峻貌璀璨玉光也韞藏也

噓竹彈絲  
簫韶拊拍  
逸韻鏗鏘  
淋鈴裂帛

湍激峯廻

霆轟電掣  
賡詠翁諧  
濫竽差測

右節音迭奏宮商克諧不知樂者不能和聲也聖教廣播近交孚不知道者不能行善也簫韶古樂名拊撫同鏗鏘樂之節奏淋鈴曲名裂帛樂聲也湍激水流之疾峯廻山勢之紆譬樂聲之徐速也濫竽有竽之名而不能吹者也

c.12

脂妍粉媚  
秀麗崑鍾  
黛痕楊柳  
緣蔭梧桐

桃李競暖  
松柏耐冬  
趁候釀景  
苑囿酣暢

右節和木秀於一時  
上主猶界以景色衆  
人生於一世上主更  
復新酣暢也

騰 祥 毓 瑞  
鳳 翥 麟 遨  
驂 騶 馳 騁  
鸞 鶴 翔 翱

c.13

飽 飫 芳 馨  
蓺 畝 蓄 菜  
剖 瓜 採 薇  
煮 葵 拾 芥

鷄 埶 豚 柵  
鴻 渚 鵠 巢  
饁 餌 敷 豫  
詎 亟 烹 庖

掇 擷 鬱 芬  
咀 嚼 彌 快  
胡 羨 腥 羶  
饌 肴 侈 泰

右節鳥獸之微上主  
猶備餌以養其生人  
何憂衣食之不足而  
徒烹庖之爲亟哉翥  
飛也遨遊也敷豫足  
也

右節蔬菜爲天地之  
正味足以衛生而悅  
口不必更求腥羶徒  
侈肴饌之盛猶之聖  
教爲古今正道足以  
滅罪而救靈不必妄  
拜他神徒尙偶像之  
多飫鑿足也蓺種也  
腥羶鳥獸之肉

c.15

鱗 介 蕃 滋  
譜 題 麤 確  
龜 鼈 鼃 鼉  
鯤 鰲 鯨 鱣

淬 蝗 掬 蝦  
泅 雀 撈 蛤  
卵 濕 累 蔞  
俄 頃 跳 躍

c.14

右節鱗介之族雖多  
然中無靈魂其跳躍  
不過少頃耳可見人  
生甚爲貴重奈何竟  
等於鱗介而不思救  
其靈哉蕃滋言衆多  
也淬泅沒水之貌蝗  
落水則化蝦又雀入  
大水爲蛤見禮月令  
俄頃少頃也

c.16.

蠶 織 蛛 組  
蚓 唱 蟬 吟  
徜徉 邃 閣  
紬 繹 閒 庭

拋 鬻 獵 蟻  
搏 飯 鬩 蠅  
公 麼 瞬 盼  
岡 忬 淒 辛

右節公麼小蟲暫有  
生命所以絕無思慮  
不知有艱辛之事人  
則生命甚重失救甚  
苦其當如何信心而  
始得免淒楚也織也

組亦織也鬻肉屑也  
蟻攢肉屑也有如獵  
然鬩鬩也麼渺小也  
忬思也淒淒楚辛  
艱辛

c.17

黽 勉 肅 雍  
慌 逢 殤 殂  
軀 殼 匪 牢  
眚 慝 酸 楚

涕 淚 悚 惶  
頻 挈 伴 侶  
旦 肄 旬 譟  
警 惕 臭 腐

右節言人當勤求於  
道致敬盡禮畏死亡  
之日近而如肉體之  
牢罪惡之未免邀結  
同志恐懼祈求蓋深  
湯臭腐之期靈魂之  
失於救耳黽勉勤求  
也肅誠敬雍和順夭  
死曰殤壽死曰殂軀  
殼肉身也眚小罪慝  
陰惡悚惶恐懼之貌

c.18

矧 窺 浩 蕩  
暄 突 無 邊  
緝 熙 淵 穆  
翹 睇 鈞 顏

匍 匍 跣 踣  
慙 懟 胥 刪  
偃 僂 踧 躅  
冥 頑 徐 悛

右節上主之德廣大  
無名上主之功光明  
可見人當沈思邈慮  
若或見之則跪拜禱  
祝化其不善之心而  
敬謹恭順感受聖靈  
自改其前日之冥頑  
矣浩蕩廣大貌暄突  
宣著盛大之貌緝熙  
光明之淵穆深遠之  
意懟怨也刪除也偃  
僂鞠躬也踧躅恭敬  
也冥頑不靈者也悛  
改也

c.19.

策 絜 臣 僚  
禹 湯 堯 舜  
箴 規 紳 儒  
仲 閔 孔 孟

斟 酌 奢 淳  
雙 甄 標 準  
炎 火 怖 燒  
撫 膺 敏 懇

右節言耶穌之道  
其教人致君澤民  
正心誠意人當斟  
酌於真偽之途甄  
別其信徒之準以  
循當然之則而豈  
怖永火之無救始  
盡心以昭事上帝  
哉策勉也絜領也  
浮華曰奢樸實曰  
淳甄別也膺心胸  
之間



## Chapter Five

### *Weaving Sage Teaching Jesus as Jeonghan*

#### I. Introduction

This chapter will focus on Yi Byeok's ethico-religious thought through a closer examination of the *Hymn for the Reverence of the Lord of Heaven* and the *Essence of the Sage Teaching*. Therefore, in the subsection Orientation of Thought some concepts such as *susin*, *sudeok*, *jiphui*, *seong-in* will be further discussed, and new ones will be introduced, such as reverential fear -- *cheom* (忝) --, *jeonghan-in* (情恨人) the person of passionate grief, and *munaejae* (瞋內在), dimly-perceived immanence. We will suggest that in the supplemental interpretation reached by Yi Byeok the *seong-in*, the person-of-sincerity, cannot but become the person of passionate heartache, who experiences *susin* (self-cultivation) as self-expenditure through "bursts of passionate grief" (*jeonghan*).<sup>1)</sup>

A systematic interpretation to the *EST* must acknowledge, a priori, that its 'oblique semantics' so peculiar to East Asia in general, or to the Korean mind-heart one may call *simjeong* (心情) in particular, render the task extremely difficult.<sup>2)</sup> Indeed the 'systematic interpretation', as we have argued in the General Introduction, must struggle to make sense of what Yi Byeok characteristically expresses, or weaves in poetic form.

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1) I have borrowed the expression "burst of passionate grief" -- and further associated it to *han* (恨) -- from *The Cambridge History of English and American Literature*, ed. by A.W. Ward, A.R. Waller, W.P. Trent, J. Erskine, S.P. Sherman, and C. Van Doren. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons; Cambridge, England: University Press, 1907-21. (18 Volumes), Volume V., 'The Drama to 1642, Part One,' § 13, "Variety in dialect and metre in the English Mysteries and Miracle-plays." For the notion of *jeonghan*, in the meaning we offer in this thesis, see Cheon I. D. (千二斗), *Han Gujoyeongu (Research on the Structure of Han)*, Seoul: Munhwa gwa Chiseong Sa Press, 1993.

2) For an enlightening perspective on this issue see, Cheng, C. Y.'s 'Logic and Language in Chinese Philosophy', *Journal of Chinese Philosophy*, vol. 14., 1987, pp. 285-307.

In Paradigms we will dwell a little more on the Neo-Confucian paradigm with which Yi Byeok was associated, and subsequently discuss three related notions: *cheondeok* (天德), *indo* (人道) and Heaven. The main part of the chapter will naturally deal with the *EST*. Following each segment, as seen in the *EST*, we will offer our perspective, underlining a major premise: in the poetical apprehension of God Yi Byeok weaves or unfolds a tradition-imbedded, com-passionate idea of God. He suggests that Yaso's teaching entwines itself and finds expression in the lives and deeds of sages, worthies and kings of Neo-Confucianism, of which he too is a representative.

By virtue of a passionate path of righteousness (正道) and *sudeok* (修德) -- self-virtue -- the profound person draws closer to and is sunmerged in *jiphui*, which we have translated from the *EST* as "weaving Brilliance", or the unfathomable Tao spoken of by Dasan. This is could be related to the profound person's path of self-cultivation. It is a path the individual existence chooses to walk in one's search for self-perfection, with all might and main. But one is paradoxically aware of what Kierkegaard called the "pain of resignation"<sup>3)</sup>, and Lao Tzu, "a daily diminishing."<sup>4)</sup> It is this light that one would more deeply appreciate Dasan's expression *jongcheonmyeong irae* (從天命而來) -- returning to Heaven -- itself a notion abstracted from the *Doctrine of the Mean*. It implies an existential return informed by "infinite resignation": the person of sincerity would become a 'hostage', in the sense suggested by Lévinas, gazing "at the face of God", or as Yi Byeok put it: her eyes muddled in self-renunciation, understanding that "one is capable of nothing" but self-expenditure; hence, this qualified *sudeok*.<sup>5)</sup>

And as she returns, the seong-in harbours no regret, because "to return means to return to the good."<sup>6)</sup> This is the way we will interpret Yi Byeok's

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3) Kierkegaard, S., *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness unto Death*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, p. 61.

4) Cheng, C. Y., *op. cit.*, p. 302. Cf. Lao Tzu, *Tao Teh Ching*, trans. John C. H. Wu, New York: St. John's University Press, 1961, ch. 48.

5) Kierkegaard, S., *Works of Love*, London: Harper, 1962, p. 355.

6) *RTAH*, V:4, p. 157.

rendering of self-cultivation in his *EST*, which is his exegetical task of rendering *cheom*, the heart veiled under heaven, in 'reverential shame.' This is a task that the person of sincerity chooses to take in her com-passionate relationship with Heaven. On its path, therefore, one lives resignation in a heightened dimension of pathos, both as "essentially suffering"<sup>7)</sup> and "weaving Brilliance."

Ethically and religiously, we will conclude, Yi Byeok's person of sincerity, through "bursts of passionate grief", comes to stand alone in the fragility of the inherent compassion of the God-relationship, for "what one cherishes is the value veiled within."<sup>(3.10)</sup><sup>8)</sup> Therefore, such a relationship -- and this is our major hypothesis in this thesis -- seems consistent with the message articulated in the *EST*, for the person of sincerity, ultimately understood as *jeonghan-in*, "brilliance" (熙) is equivalent to self-expenditure. This is similar to the mundane way Yaso expended himself as he "cared for the tribe and tended the afflicted, during nights, mornings and months" (a.11); his brilliant love becoming ever greater, despite his being put to death." (b.14)

## II. Orientation of Thought

The *jeonghan-in* is the resigning existence before the Other. The person whose existence must be underpinned in the first person by the Other; it is not initially 'myself'. The concept resigning existence -- myself -- appears not as the foundation of *sudeok* or salvation. *Sudeok* is for the sake of the other soul, and that was an idea that, in the *EST*, challenged and transcended traditional *susin*.

Borrowing from Yi Byeok, existence thus apprehended becomes synonymous with an "earthen pathway" (b.10) of the Same that renews itself and constantly de-faces itself towards the Other beyond self-recognition. Yi Byeok used the image of the grasshopper that falls in the water and becomes a shrimp, or the sparrow that dives in the waters and turns itself into a shellfish (c.15).<sup>9)</sup> The logic of

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7) Kierkegaard, S., *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 256.

8) Quotations from the *EST* will be followed by their respective passage numbers.

9) In the *Odes*, it is said, "How can say the sparrow has no horn? How else could it bore

self-defacement grows deeper as one abides by to Fate itself, the Mandate of Heaven, or reverential shame (*cheom* 忝). Thus, Yi Byeok urges the *seonbi* to revere with absolute sincerity and be obedient (c.17). Qualified obedience is *ong* (雍): benign obedience, or “docile virtue” (順德), as Legge translated in the *Book of Odes*.<sup>10</sup> This paradigm reminds one of *hyeodo* (孝道) through which King Woo, it is written, “ever thinking how to be filial,” continued the works of his fathers. Filial piety, apprehended as self-expenditure or deference before the Other, before High Heaven (高天). All a king -- or the *seonbi* -- should do is “to show the filial duty which had come down to him”(遙追來孝).<sup>11</sup>

Similarly, Yi Byeok argues that in existence’s tragic logic, beauty and mystery, the achievements Sangju -- themselves unfathomable in their laws but expressed concretely in the beautiful harmony between human beings and the ten thousand things (萬物) -- have come down to Yaso’s teaching. Indeed, he suggests that the true meaning and the actualisation of human life would be illuminated by the laws of the “ardent search” which is at the same time equal to infinite resignation. When these laws were brought to earth, or else ‘incarnated’, they are capable of undressing the self in broad day light. Thus, was the Nazarene incarnated and denuded in a world Yi Byeok phrased as “ruined universe”: “Caught was [Yaso] like a fish alive”(b.14).

Yi Byeok’s thought, as compared to Ricci’s, could only develop differently. It started from a departure point closely related to the *Doctrine of the Mean’s* mystical philosophy: virtue, or the Mandate, stems from Heaven (*jongcheonmyeong irae* 從天命而來) and returns to Heaven (*gwichi yeo cheonmyeong* 歸致於天命) in ever deepening anxiety. One’s ardent search is, in and by itself, a return: *minmyeon* (黽勉, c.17). Yi Byeok chooses to present his arguments through a) a sketchy, paradigmatic life and death of a sage, Yaso, b) the *yurim* sagely tradition, and c) the sage *qua* Nature.

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through my house.” See Legge, J., *The Chinese Classics, The She King*, vol. IV, bk. II, ode vi, 2, Taipei: SMC Publishing Inc., reprint, 1994. p. 27.

10) *Op. cit.* bk. I, ode IX, 4, p. 459.

11) *Op. cit.*, bk. I, ode X, 3, p. 462.

By actualising *sudeok* the *jeonghan-in* becomes a self-expending earthen pathway living within a "ruined universe" (a.12). By gradually becoming conscious of his path, he will perceive Heaven as the 'origin' (*geunwon*, b.8) to which he ardently seeks to return. He seeks to actualise absolute sincerity (致誠), the ultimate fate: Becoming as self-expenditure. Consequently, the *jeonghan-in* becomes a *seong-in*, whose world smoulders in dimly-perceived immanence, however inflamed by the summons of the Other. In the *EST*, Yaso is the paradigmatic Other, who falls prostrated under the face of God (c.18). He is able to yield and must care for those who even persecute and turn away from him, because he "overflowed in [self] perfection" (a.11), or self-expenditure. Thus the *seong-in*, who in her ardent search seeks to overcome *myeong-wan* (冥頑), a "condition where one falls short of spirituality" (c.18), downs existence under the Other: the "face of God", or *Sangju* (上主). This mode of passivity, of course, bespeaks absolute spiritedness. Hence, her mission is a form of active sub-mission or self-depletion. Apprehending *Sangju* in dimly-perceived immanence, she becomes both enlightened and tormented not by the plough of Infinity but its vestiges, "the vestiges of [a] creative process" initiated by *Sangju* himself (c.1). Hence the *seong-in* must flounce a sort of spiritual pathway which, although collapsed in existence, has been religiously crossed -- or historically transmitted -- "over the generations" (a.2). In a world filled with symbols and sacrifices, she should "look for the Path ardently, by observing the rites" (禮 c.17).

The question arises as to how Yi Byeok arranged his supplemental rendering of Catholicism vis-à-vis Confucian *susin*, self-cultivation.. Our thesis is that he started by rendering faith, i.e., com-passion (愛情), as unfathomable suffering which is the foundation of his Korean theological *jeonghan*-filled poetry. Thus, to paraphrase Kierkegaard who said that, "after having made the movements of infinity... [faith] makes those of finiteness",<sup>12)</sup> we will argue that Yi Byeok portrays the *seong-in* as leading towards infinity, and receiving the mandate, the finite ebb of tradition and self-expenditure:

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12) Kierkegaard, S., *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness unto Death*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974, p. 48.

From the place of the Son of Heaven,  
Came an order to march.<sup>13)</sup>

She will fall under the imperative of expending her existence towards the Other, so as to return, and approach the nearness of God. The journey is riveted with awe and distress:

When we were marching at first  
The millets were in flower.  
Now that we are returning,  
The snow falls, and the roads are all mire...  
(...)  
Did we not long to return? (豈不懷歸)<sup>14)</sup>

Blanchot suggests that "the Finite is only the ebb of the Infinite,"<sup>15)</sup> or as Yi Byeok put, the Infinite -- the Idea of God -- behaves like *sagi* (駛驥), the sea-tides that come and go like *Cheonllima*, the mythical horse (c.5). One longs for the endowment which ought to return to Heaven, as implied in the *Doctrine of the Mean*, and that oriented Yi Byeok in his weaving of Sage Teaching.

#### a. Method

The Oriental inductive approach is our the departure point. It will supplement the poetical rendition of Yi Byeok's own figurative hermeneutics. Hence, the approach will sharply contrast with Ricci's overall deductive discourse on the Creator; so much so that it will become patent that Yi Byeok's work might not even appear as a genuine theological reflection, if it is looked exclusively from a Western point of view. As a 'poetic fragment', we shall not contend that the *EST* be understood as such.

Yi Byeok worked on supplemental lines, on the understanding that virtue

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13) *Odes*, bk I, ode VIII, 1., p. 261.

14) *Op. cit.*, p. 263, 4.

15) Blanchot, M., *The Writing of the Disaster*, Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995, p. 31.

and works, characteristic of a volitional Heaven, are reflected on earth through particular persons who 'incarnate' and transmit *sudeok* and absolute sincerity, the path leading to deep reverence. In the *EST*, the inductive approach presents itself as an aphorism: "Sangju's virtue [上主之德]", being "immense and incomparable", makes His works plainly manifest. Thus, "people should reflect about it in a deep manner." (c.18). Yaso was one such person, and people should believe in "this Seok". This *Seok* is the comparison Yi Byeok makes to distinguish the historical Buddha in whom people believed, from Yaso, whom he associates with *Seok* (釋迦牟尼, 556?-480 B.C.E).

The *Four Books* and *Three Classics* were supplementally interpreted according to Yi Byeok's "ardent search" for the concreteness of those who have passed through time, and become history. Accordingly, we will be particularly concerned with some major existential themes as *cheom*, the person of absolute sincerity (*seong-in*), and the person of passionate grief (*jeonghan-in*).

The *Old* and *New Testaments* themselves are likewise interpreted as sources attempting to glimpse the truth of Sangje's "virtue and works" in the history of human salvation, i.e., in the *jeonghan-in*'s concrete process of becoming -- self-cultivation -- and his spiritual ascent towards the Other, Sangju.

Yi Byeok should have had the following Pauline passage in mind as he wrote the final note in the *EST*: "Sangje, throughout history, reveals Himself as a human being perfected in humankind's concrete living conditions":

I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ -- he is the Lord of all.<sup>16)</sup>

Hence, his thematic method -- and our basic philosophical approach to the *EST* -- will be one equated with the path of righteousness and self-expenditure *qua* Heaven.

From the *Doctrine of the Mean* one abstracts the notion that human nature

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16) Acts, 10:34.



may be thought as the endowment of Heaven, i.e. the Mandate "stemming from Heaven" -- *jongcheonmyeong irae* -- which also constitutes the springboard for the spiritual emergence of the profound person. Ultimately it leads to the discovery of Christhood or self-expenditure in one's own endowment, understood as the Mandate "returning to Heaven" -- *gwichi yeo cheonmyeong*. Indeed, this underlines a unique theological thread running through religious thought proper.

Reflecting on the paradigmatic value of the *Four Books* and *Three Classics* as compared to both the Old and New Testaments, Yi Byeok thought it entirely pertinent to introduce and sharpen the supplemental religious contents, themselves borrowed paradigms, in his *EST*. In the *EST*, *Sangje's* creative work and Yaso's message of redemption is re-transmitted in terms of eighteenth century Joseon's *modus vivendi*. Thus, the redeemer of the biblical text, or *Sage Scriptures* (聖書), the meaning and vicissitudes of human life, and the nature of reality are interpreted in these terms. But we will maintain that they are informed by *jeonghan* -- self-expenditure -- and what Dasan called *yeonji-ji giho* (靈知之記號), a spiritual faculty paralleling Yi Ik's rendering of sanguine *gi*: human beings are distinct from other animals and the ten thousand things due to sanguine *gi* (氣血). As we will try to elucidate, *jeonghan* follows on the heels of *yeonji-ji giho*, for as we read in the *EST*, it is equivalent to soulful spirituality and self-expenditure.

We will argue that Yi Byeok developed and combined a com-passionate hermeneutics with the enlightened kind of spirit informed by *jeonghan* in his own personal practice of *sudeok*. Having earlier introduced a revised, non-extant guide for a mystical-practical life, Yi Byeok completed his version of Catholic teaching after a period of deep meditation and great tribulations. Indeed what he called "ardent search", as the method derived from his existential investigation into Catholicism, is a combination of two pictographs *min-myeong*, suggesting self-strength and being put 'under pressure', or in literal terms, 'being under Heaven' (*cheom*) in the face of the Other.

Although this com-passionate hermeneutics falls short of becoming a Korean theology *per se*, Yi Byeok's work is both a passion, in a Kierkegaardian sense, and a teaching of underscoring self-expenditure towards the Other. It is emblematic of the Jesuit 'way of proceeding.' He recalled that when the Jesuits "transmitted

Yaso's teachings, they did not shy away from hardships, but stood the cold and the heat to reach far-flung lands." Granted, this was an exercise in consolation and self-expenditure:

The brave missionaries restore the hungry  
And console the lonely;  
Forgive the penitent and liberate those who persist sinning  
By embracing the barbarians  
The people of Je and No  
They behave like Yo and Gu

From remote regions to the very centre of the world  
They depended upon the polar star  
To arrive at their destinations.  
Winning over cold and hot weather they came  
And the limits of the globe they reached.  
By depending on the latitude of the heavens.<sup>17)</sup>

Yi Byeok himself attempted to enlighten the exercitant -- the *seonbi* -- to "arrive at the destination" and by so doing, he would seek to persuade the *jurim* class.

### b. Structural Themes

We will favour the paradigmatic interpretation of Neo-Confucianism before delving into Yi Byeok's text proper, as it is intimately synonymous with Joseon's dynasty and the major influence that dominated the scholarly circles. Our study must be contextually supported by the dominant tradition during Yi Byeok's time, and Chu Hsi's overall relevance at court should be emphasised.

In Yi Byeok's text, *Sangje*, the foundation and original principle (*geunwon*) for human existence and all things in the universe, was introduced in passage a.1, Part A. The *han* of human existence, a concrete historical reality, was presented as such in passage a.2; Yaso's incarnation as a redeemer was described according to the Bible. The profound man (君子)<sup>18)</sup> and the *seong-wang* (聖王), kingly-sage, are

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17) EST, b.15

18) We have been referring to the 'gentleman' of the Chinese moral universe as the 'profound person', thus agreeing with the definition advanced by Tu-Wei Ming, according to which the profound person is viewed "in terms of a process toward an ever-deepening subjectivity." The caveat we would make is that this concept be religiously characterised as the *jeonghan-in*, who

similar notions portrayed in passages *a.3-15*. These are associated with the idea of redemption, wholeness or return-to-wholeness, a point reminiscent of Neo-Confucianism's teachings concerning *susin* (修身), family management (齊家), the rule of the nation (治國) and universal peace (平天下), which are existential and educational processes themselves.

By *seong-in* moreover, we also mean not only a 'person of sincerity' who in being sincere finds herself constantly in a process of sincere becoming. The *seong-in* lives from the Other, in self-expending patience. It is in this sense that Yaso appears as a person of sincerity, the *seong-in* upon whom *cheondo*, the Way of Heaven is reflected, but through whom the fortune and misfortune of the world are said to be both laid upon and transcended.<sup>19)</sup> It is in this sense that we will qualify Yaso's self-expending virtue as *jeonghan*. Whomever follows Yaso's teaching will be able to apprehend, emulate and become com-passionately overshadowed by Heaven and, by living *jeonghan* he or she will also live self-expenditure and thus emulate Yaso in terms of self-cultivation as seen in "Tradition", Part B, passages *b.1-15*.

Finally, "Nature Poetry (*Jayeolsi*)", Part C, passages *c.1-18*, deals with Yi Byeok's supplemented doctrine and its moral axioms that could lead humankind "back to Heaven." It presents the ways in which all things in the universe reveal 'the hidden mystery of Sangje' -- a notion largely abstracted from the *Doctrine of the Mean* that guided Yi Byeok as a compass -- by reflecting the endowment and obeying the laws given to them.

Yi Byeok's idea of God reveals Sangje in His mysterious ways vis-à-vis the way of being truly human, through a self-expending Yaso. The Supreme Other both sympathises with and overwhelms human existence. If passionate grief may be thought as an endowment -- as existential separation from the Source --, then the

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living passionate grief, can be spoken of as "an existing individual [who] is constantly in a process of [self-expending] becoming." See, *Centrality and Commonality: An Essay on Confucian Religiousness*, New York: State University of New York Press, 1989. pp. 25-37. For the notion of Becoming, see Kierkegaard, S., *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968, p. 79.

19) See *Chapter Three*, footnote 32.

incarnated virtue ought to com-passionately "stem from" and "returns to" the Eternal One. Consequently one could figuratively say that Heavens' Way glows in human existence throughout a history of pain-love (痛愛). The incarnated virtue manifests itself in one's daily life as com-passionate *sudeok*, and self-expenditure that seek to be satiated.

In the *EST*, if one inquires into the historical truth of Catholic-Confucian teaching, or into the internal principles of things in life, the result of this deep consideration is a transfusing of oneself unto Yaso's salvific virtue, a dying of the self towards the Other and hence within *jeonghan* -- for both *jeonhan* and salvation are the crossroads where Humankind and Heaven can meet. In other words, Yaso was portrayed by Yi Byeok as the living focus, for he displayed "the utmost patience"<sup>20)</sup>. Yaso was the bond, bringing together the Heaven of *Jeong* and the Sea of *Han*, as in quoted poem by Han Young-un. Thus *jeonghan* can become, to paraphrase Lévinas, a cipher for "the sacredness of man's relation to man through which God may pass."<sup>21)</sup> Dasan's inscrutable Deity, Yi Byeok's *jiphui* leaves the door open to patience, a station beyond inexorable suffering. Hence, Yi Byeok's asks, "if one loses sight of salvation [patience] what shall become of their suffering? [self-expenditure]"(c.15). Paul's epistle to the Romans put it this way: "what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."<sup>22)</sup>

### III. Paradigms

#### a. *Principle (i) and Material Force (gi)*

As we shall recall, Chu Hsi's philosophy became the official orthodoxy in Joseon and the doctrine of *i* did not restrict itself only to the learned circles, but penetrated the decision-making political world and was recognised as a yardstick

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20) 1 Tim. 1:16.

21) Kearny, R., 'Dialogue with Emmanuel Lévinas', ed. by Richard A. Cohen, *Face to Face with Lévinas*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986, p.18.

22) Rom. 8:25.

for virtuous human relationships. It became *the* orthodoxy.

Chu Hsi explained that Heaven is embraced by principle, and the creation of all things is in itself to be explained in terms of principle and material force (理氣論) which are responsible for Heaven and Earth. *I* is the metaphysical *Tao* and the principle of the ten thousand things. *Gi* is the metaphysical vessel (器) and the instrument for the creation of all things.

In the creation of people and all things *i* must be followed by nature (性) and *gi*, by form (形體). Hence, Chu Hsi claims that *i* determines the mode of being and the "specificity" of principle,<sup>23)</sup> whereas *gi* determines the form of existence in time and space. While *i* is the specific criterion of being, in the absence of *gi* the equipoise of existence is set off balance, and vice-versa. By no means can *i* and *gi* be dissociated, nor can they be combined to the point of becoming indistinct from one another.

We have noted that the relationship of *i* and *gi* in Chu Hsi's thought had a profound influence in Joseon, and much of the debate was epitomised by Yi Toegye and Yi Yulgok in their arguments over the Four-Seven Debate. There has been a great deal of research done on this subject; discussion of which lies beyond the scope of the present work.<sup>24)</sup> Asked which one existed first, principle or material force, Chu Hsi answered that *i* existed before material force, whereas *gi* existed after material form. A conspicuous notion of necessity and causality links one to the other, and although *i* can be spoken of as being prior to *gi*, there is no such clear distinction between the two. *I* can be without *gi*, for it comes first, but *gi* necessarily follows the mirroring of *i*. In sum, Chu Hsi refined Cheng I's dualistic and Cheng Hao's monistic interpretations regarding the *i-gi* argument by positing a principle which points to the whole and is reflected individually, as a whole, on the ten thousand things. Hence, *i* may be understood as both immanent and transcendent.<sup>25)</sup>

One would note, however, that a tendency towards a serious involvement

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23) *SBCP*. Chan points to the specificity of principle, p. 6.

24) For a general perspective on Toegye see Edward. Y.J. Chung's 'Yi T'oegye on the Learning of Reverential Seriousness', in *Korea Journal*, Spring 1992, vol. 32.

25) *SBCP*, pp. 634-635.

with philosophical introspection was maintained down the centuries and played an important role in Yi Byeok's personal approach to self-cultivation and reverential seriousness, itself synonymous with an inner-mirrored, outward-reflected sincerity. This was a trend already set by Toegye who believed that reverential seriousness (敬) was the only way through which the *seong-in* could reach Heaven. In the *EST* Yi Byeok called it *in* (寅). Both views concur with the *I Ching* which says that the profound person "straightens his internal life with seriousness".<sup>26)</sup> In reverential seriousness the profound person privileges inner peace of mind, or "apprehensive reverence". Fearing the last judgement (鞫), Yi Byeok maintained, one ought to "pray on bent knees with their whole heart" (b.15). This is the extended path of *sudeok*: to approach with caution and submersed in 'anxiety', that is, in *cheom*. Hence, in reverential seriousness the *seong-in* approaches or extends knowledge, so as to internally realise heavenly principles. Religiously speaking, we will use the term 'dimly-perceived immanence'(臚內在) when referring to consciousness's task of apprehending the metaphysical *i*, or heavenly principles (天理).

When viewed from the perspective of the literati tradition, however, consciousness does not simply refer to the transcendental, or a latent attribute underlining the virtuous exercise of self-discipline. The scholar seeks to apprehend the principle of things in order to "extend knowledge." This became evident, as we tried to show in Chapter Two, in the way An Jeong-bok criticised Seohak. In Ricci's *TMLH*, however, a metaphysical awareness informs the reader about the original nature of goodness and, to a lesser degree, original sin. This teaching approached consciousness and goodness as a means to personal restoration, or the return to *geunwon*. If Ricci, on the one hand, pleaded that Seohak's principle (*i*) may and indeed should be embraced by all religious traditions, on the other, to the less willing Confucian literati -- like An Jeong-bok -- religious Seohak was sheer absurdity.

b. *Cheondeok* (天德) and *Indo* (人道)

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26) Legge, J., trans., *Yi King*, p. 420. See also, *RTAH*, XII: 15, p. 273.



Due to the scarcity of literature Yi Byeok left, his work and philosophical orientation is best studied in the writings of Jeong Yak-yong (Dasan, 1762-1836), his Namin disciple, particularly in the *Yeoyudang Jeonjip*. During King Jeongjo's seventh year (1783), Dasan was summoned to submit an exegetical manuscript regarding the *Doctrine of the Mean*.<sup>27)</sup>

Originally, the *Doctrine of the Mean* constituted a chapter in the *Book of Rites*.<sup>28)</sup> Along with the *Great Learning* it was selected by Chu Hsi to form the corpus of the *Four Books* (the other two being the *Analects* and the *Book of Mencius*). Afterwards they were to exert enormous influence in China for about six centuries, particularly the *Great Learning*, with its emphasis on method and procedure, and the *Doctrine of the Mean* with its religious and mystical hues. At times the latter echoes the *Book of Mencius*, which prompted some scholars to suggest that it is a philosophical outgrowth of Mencius's thought. Be this as it may, the *Doctrine of the Mean* is a philosophical work about which Chu Hsi emphasised the priority of *i*, for Heaven (which imparts human nature to the "teeming multitude") is synonymous with it. Yi Byeok, on the other hand, in his "ardent search" for truth, took Heaven religiously, as a metaphysical end, or return:

Footprints trace back to an eminent source

[Whose original purity] is lost in defilement [of one's nature].

And he explains that

... after Sangju [上主] created Heaven and Earth, the vestiges of this creative process are the means to lead the people of the world through a heart of sincere commitment [誠信之心].<sup>29)</sup>

Dasan, as we can read from his writings, relied on and cherished Yi Byeok's views on religious and some philosophical themes, so that we can for sure have a glimpse at the latter's thought, particularly as it bears on the *EST*. In parts

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27) Dasan, J., *Yeoyudang Jeonjip*, Seoul: Yogan Press, vol. IV, 1989, p. 261 (Chinese version).

28) The *Book of Rites*, one of the Five Classics of ancient China.

29) *EST*, c.1



of Dasan's above-mentioned work, one reads what may be regarded as Yi Byeok's general understanding of the *Doctrine of the Mean*:

As one carefully looks into the *Jung yong* [*Doctrine of the Mean*], the sentence 'approach with caution and fear' is the truthful concept conducive to the investigation [of things]. Broadly speaking, what is written in every paragraph and every chapter of the *Jung yong* proceeds from *cheonmyeong* [天命] and returns to it, so that the Tao's cause-effect relationship is thereby manifest. That is why we read that *cheonmyeong* and Nature [率性] are realised through what is recurrent in *cheonmyeong*'s unflinching singularity, from the practise of self-discipline to the composition of a broad and sharp-witted demeanour. Having said that, from the perfection of self and of all things, one aims at the constitution of the universe and the whole nation. From what is recorded in Heaven, the *Mean* is the Tao's cause and effect.<sup>30)</sup>

Hence, from this passage it seems clear that Yi Byeok interpreted the introductory passage in the *Doctrine of the Mean* as a consistent Mandate (*cheonmyeong*) both 'stemming from Heaven' (*jongcheonmyeong irae*) and 'returning to Heaven' (*gwichi yeo cheonmyeong*).

As a path embraced by Heaven and equated with the metaphysical *i*, Yi Byeok's *cheonmyeong* is in this regard very different from the traditional interpretation. Indeed, Chu Hsi affirmed that Tzu-ssu, Kung-Tzu's grandson who is believed to have compiled the *Doctrine of the Mean*, clearly showed that the origin of Tao is traced to Heaven, but its concrete substance is complete in ourselves.<sup>31)</sup> In Dasan and particularly in Yi Byeok's *EST*, existential perfection can only be passively thought from and returned to *cheonmyeong*, whose 'concreteness', as it were, overshadows phenomenal life.

The individual person follows the path of study and inquiry, and sincerely honours the moral nature with which he has been endowed. He submits to Transcendence -- despite the defilement of one's nature -- and thus attains the greatest Brilliancy. In this sense, one is 'overshadowed'. Yi Byeok understood as *cheonmyeong* both the sentences, 'stemming from Heaven' and 'returning from

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30) Dasan, D., *op. cit.*, p.23. My translation.

31) *SBCP*, p. 98.

Heaven', and cryptically rendered the sentences 'moral character is the mandate of Heaven' and 'honouring the moral virtue' as being both included in *cheonmyeon*.<sup>32)</sup> Yi Byeok, in the EST, registered this idea with the argument in the quoted passage of the footprints tracing back to an eminent source.

In other words, if one argues about moral virtue vis-à-vis the goodness of Heaven, one is referring to its encompassing sovereignty, rather than its logical attributes. Dasan clarifies how Yi Byeok interpreted these terms, as he expounded on the concept of 'honouring the moral virtue' which characterises both Dasan and Yi Byeok, as well as and the whole Namin group siding with the idealistic-spiritual interpretation of Seohak:

Generally speaking, the phrases 'honouring the moral virtue', 'following the path of study' and 'inquiry and high esteem' are sentences equivalent to one another. How could it be that 'honouring the moral nature' subjected the other two? Both Virtue and Self are contained in *cheonmyeong*. [Therefore] honouring moral virtue entails utmost sincerity; following the path of study and inquiry brings about utmost benevolence and the greatest height and brilliancy confers a degree which denotes how high and bright something is. If one speaks of absolute sincerity one is already inferring the other two in their logical sequence. Hence, the three phrases can only refer to *cheonmyeong* above and humanness [*indo*] below. If credit is only given to honouring the moral nature, it would be a violation to the other two sentences. The Tao of the Mean is expressed through Heaven's knowledge, whose righteousness is first and foremost expressed by the phrase, 'honouring the moral nature', whereas utmost benevolence is followed by greatest height and brilliancy. The validity of this method should take precedence as a practical inquiry.<sup>33)</sup> As the Tao of the Mean, the three phrases are all versions of the goodness of Heaven, [天德]...What the Tao reveals is nothing but the Mean, itself the ultimate expression of wisdom. Since the Mean is the Tao's zenith, how could it be insignificant? It cannot be merely counted as virtuous moral character nor portioned out as knowledge and conduct. It can only be distinguished as Heaven and

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32) Historically, we should recall that these two contrasting approaches, 'honouring the moral virtue' and 'following the path of study and inquiry', gave rise to two contrasting sects: the rationalistic branch of Cheng I and Chu Hsi, and the idealistic/spiritual readings of Lu Hsiang-shan (1139-1193) and Wang Yang-Ming (1472-1529). *SBCP*, p. 110.

33) This argument in its entirety is a reflection on *Doctrine of the Mean*, Ch. 27.

We then clearly see that for Yi Byeok the sentences 'stemming from' and 'returning to Heaven' were interpreted not as the combination of the two different approaches, which were singled out by Chu Hsi and Lu Hsiang-shan in their debate of 1175. Rather, the concepts of 'honouring the moral nature' and 'following the path of study and inquiry', should be considered as the creative path of the Mean, the "vestiges" and "the footsteps" stemming from and returning to creational Heaven.<sup>35)</sup> Indeed, the "vestiges of this creative process are the means to lead the people of the world through a heart of sincere commitment [誠信之心]." (c.1). The profound person honours the moral conduct and follows the path of inquiry and study and seeks to reach the greatest height and brilliancy, by following the Mean.<sup>36)</sup>

What sort of 'concrete' relationship, then, do humanness (*indo*) and goodness of Heaven share? The dualistic interpretation Dasan -- and Yi Byeok -- espoused may only be apparent. Despite the fact both rejected the 'empty talk' regarding Chu Hsi's rendering of the Great Absolute,<sup>37)</sup> neither men, in our view, can be described as dualist or monist. They focused beyond a rationalistic and/or idealistic divide. What Yi Byeok talked about and experienced himself first hand was more than subjective relevance or ontological hermeneutics. The *cheondeok* he espoused assumed Ricci's metaphysical nuances, and evoked Toegye's doctrine of the mutual emergence of *i-gi* (理氣互發說). Yi Byeok privileged self-cultivation grounded on we could term 'an adjectival relationship', synonymous with self-expenditure. It was the God-relationship by which he grew intensely fascinated in the last years of life, and in which Confucian realm he shaped his personal insight and philosophical orientation. This led him to magnify the thread allowing for a supplemental understanding of the Idea of God. From then on he launched a

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34) Dasan, J., *op. cit.*, p. 54. My translation.

35) *SBCP, Doctrine of the Mean*, Ch. 26.

36) *Ibid.*, Ch. 27.

37) Dasan J., *op. cit.*, p. 64.

unique and still unmatched approach *qua* the reality of the Lord on High and the God of the Bible.

Hence, one can maintain that Yi Byeok went over the old so as to find out what was new.<sup>38)</sup> Indeed, some Joseon scholars, as we have discussed in Chapter Two, argued that certain Confucian canons were compatible with Seohak. Other *seonbi* came to thoroughly endorse this perspective and accept some of tSeohak's most controversial claims, like the doctrine of Heaven and Hell. Hong Gyo-man and Gim Baek-sun, for instance, were scholars arrested in the 1801 persecution for sympathising with Catholicism.<sup>39)</sup> The former argued that the Western teaching corresponded with the views "written in the great Chinese classics... that Confucianism also taught us to respect Heaven because it said the principles of enlightenment came from Heaven, and there was a clause concerning the gift from the supreme ruler of Heaven to men on earth."<sup>40)</sup>

*c. Munaejae (無內在): Dimly-Perceived Immanence*

Neo-Confucianism's rationalistic and idealistic wings emphasised either an intellectual or spiritual dimension of Heaven. By adopting a reflexive approach to both *cheondeok* and *indo*, Yi Byeok interpreted tradition -- native and foreign -- through dimly-perceived immanence. Hence, he did not, and indeed could not repudiate the Neo-Confucian philosophical agenda *per se*. Rather, he found that in his age the overarching influence of Chu Hsi's naturalistic rendering of the Great Absolute, on the one hand, and the intellectual wrangling at court, on the other, represented not merely a hurdle to be overcome, but an inevitable issue to be

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38) SBCP, *The Great Learning*, 2:11; *Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 27.

39) Hong Gyo-man and Gim Baek-sun were amongst the 300 people decapitated in 1801 outside Seosomun (西小門) in the wake of *Sinyu Bakhae*, the first great religious persecution called under King Sunjo. A string of more or less severe persecutions then ensued in 1818, 1827, 1839, 1846, 1859-1860, and 1866.

40) Chun, S. Y., ed., 'Reception of Seohak (Western Learning) in Korea', Choe Seok-u, *Korean Thought*, Seoul: International Cultural Foundation, Si-sa-yong-o-sa Publishers, Inc., 1982, p.92.

reflected upon and re-enacted, as it were, through a fresh visiting of the ancient belief in *Sangje* and the supplemented notion of a volitional Heaven as introduced by the Jesuit fathers.

Chu Hsi commented that Heaven is principle and there was nothing more remarkable than this: the Great Absolute is simply the principle of the highest good.<sup>41)</sup> Commenting on the eventual ratio of Heaven (Nature) being equal to Principle, Wang Jisim observed in his *History of Chinese Religion* that the same must be true for the relationship between religion and philosophy:

People usually tend to cut off religion, as an emotional construct, from philosophy, an intellectual enterprise. However, as one looks into primeval times both religion and philosophy originated from a common source and enjoyed a parent-child relationship. We may say that subsequent philosophy and religion begot themselves from the same womb and share a mutual blood relationship.<sup>42)</sup>

Yi Byeok's reflexive equating of *cheondeok* and *indo* adopted a similar hermeneutics: virtue does not exist only in a state of latency within the mind; it is not fully mirroring *cheonmyeong* (天命) if it does not issue back practically. Indeed, the profound person is morally obliged to do more than just assuming a detached position vis-à-vis the world, as did for instance many of the Joseon scholars of his age. Self-cultivation, therefore, meant for Yi Byeok the realm of practical ethics or in his words, virtuous nature. Dasan put it thus:

Without personal practice, how can virtue exist?...The nature originally takes pleasure in the good. When it responds to emotional stimuli and is aroused, it becomes the good heart. When this heart is extended it may be regarded as humanity, dutifulness, propriety and wisdom. Accordingly this nature is called the virtuous nature.<sup>43)</sup>

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41) *SBCP*, p. 640.

42) Wang J. S. *Jungguk jonggyo yeoksa* (中國宗教歷史), Shanghai: Shanghai Samryun Seojom, 1988 p. 2. My translation.

43) Quoted in Mark Setton's 'Dasan's Practical Learning', *Philosophy East and West*, vol. 39, no.4, p. 384, 1989.

On the basis of righteousness, benevolence, propriety and wisdom, the elements of the Mencian doctrine of innate goodness (性善說), one can posit a moral dimension of expression. Dasan's counterpart to this is called the physical faculty, *hyeonggu ji giho* (形軀之記號). But human beings also look back to regain their original's heart.<sup>44)</sup> Or as Ricci put, they try to return to their "native heath" -- *bonga* (本家).<sup>45)</sup> One also faces a metaphysical dimension of hearing: the "way of the Sage is to be heard through the ear, to be preserved in the heart."<sup>46)</sup> Dasan dwell on similar topics as he further theorised on a transcendental faculty he termed *yeonji ji giho* (靈知之記號), in his explanation of the *Doctrine of the Mean*.<sup>47)</sup>

While Chu Hsi interpreted 'learning' in a rationalistic way, although implying a dimension-in-hearing 'beyond words' (不言), Yi Byeok also followed the same approach but did not render *jadeuk* (自得), as "in a natural way", but "to find [truth] in oneself." The *seonbi* must apprehend and actualise the highest religious truth on earth.<sup>48)</sup> This is accomplished in *munaejae*, dimly-perceived immanence:

... one must discern what is under ... hair and skin.  
For the created thread within one's heart,  
In its being abstruse, betokens a well of mystery. (c.6)

Dimly-perceived apprehension -- a reflection of sincerity -- takes place spontaneously, for "sincerity engages in no activity."<sup>49)</sup> The sphere of absolute sincerity (致誠) evokes a passage in the *Analects*, in which *chimyeong* (致命) means

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44) *SBCP*, 'Mencius' 4B:12.

45) *TMLH*, p. 239.

46) *RTAH*, p. 35.

47) Dasan J., *Yeoyudang Jeonjib*, 'Jung yong jajam', Jeonju: Jeonju University Press, 1986 3:2b.

48) For Chu Hsi's argument on *jadeuk* see *Chu Hsi yü-lei*, 95:36b. Quoted in *SBCP*, p. 58. Separation is the "cause for hatred between ruler and minister, between father and son, and among relatives or friends... some slander and evil has set them apart." Cf. *RTAH*, VIII:8, p. 207.

49) *Ibid.*, *Chu Tzu yü-lei*, 94:27b.

giving up one's life.<sup>50)</sup> This is a concept similar to Novalis' expression *Selbsttötung*, 'the dying of the self' in its mortal, finite movement towards the Other:

Oh draw at my heart, love,  
Draw till I'm gone,  
That, fallen asleep, I  
Still may love on.<sup>51)</sup>

'Self-dying' is the paradox of "seeing the invisible, of saying the ineffable."<sup>52)</sup> In the *EST*, Yi Byeok tells us, it means the personal quest of restoring "spiritual ignorance." This is the realm of *munaejae* which emerges in the *EST*, "To those who love and grieve."<sup>53)</sup> In the realm of *jeonghan*:

Mystical thoughts and memories of far-off times lighten up. (c.5)

The merciless spanking he went through;  
The vinegar given to quench his thirst, and  
His fibulae gradually bartered;  
But his love becoming ever greater,  
[despite his being put to death.] (b.14)

How much more so should we heed what is vast  
Widely flourishing and boundless,  
Weaving Brilliance, the unfathomable, and  
Thus glimpse the Face of the Creator.  
One falls prostrated on bent knees.  
Shame and resentment shall be all eradicated:  
By attending Heaven with reverential shame  
One shall gradually restore spiritual ignorance. (c.18)

We have argued that the Joseon-Seohak community was concerned less with blue heaven *per se*, and more with Heaven as the source of goodness and reverential shame to which practical *indo* reflects. The Mandate of Heaven

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50) It was Ch'eng I who eventually interpreted *chimyeong* to mean "investigating fate to the utmost."

51) Novalis, 'Hymns to the Night', at <http://www.logopoeia.com/novalis/hymns.html>

52) Blanchot. M., *op. cit.*, p. 23.

53) Novalis, *URL* quoted.



paradoxically reflected as an earthly bond Jesus himself personified. In this sense Yi Byeok's idea of the Deity is illuminated by a mystical view of the profound person in whose mind Heaven becomes infinitely spawned and gradually unveiled: "He who knows his nature knows Heaven."<sup>54)</sup>

The profound person, thus trailing the path of practical *indo* which can restore "spiritual ignorance", is then overshadowed by reverential shame, or *cheom*: to approach Heaven with caution and fear is conducive to the investigation of things, and the giving up of one's life. In this light Yi Byeok was following tradition after all, while at the same time looking to Yaso as "the pioneer and perfecter of faith."<sup>55)</sup> That was his realm of interpretive *munaejae*.

Yi Byeok urged that the *seonbi* practiced *sudeok*, that they probed and examined the 'principles' of existence. The *seonbi* should discard the sterile devotion to literary study, political infirmity and strife "until [his] understanding is penetrating and profound."<sup>56)</sup> Understanding, however, would become penetrating if it is overshadowed by Heaven -- *jiphui* -- the sort of mystical Brilliance which weaves the idea of God into one's "investigation of things." Being under it, the *seong-in* readies herself to give up life as "everything must be traced to its source"<sup>57)</sup>, to the "eminent source." Similar to a hymn echoing the Infinite, the mind opens itself up to bursts of both profound love and penetrating grief.

#### IV. The Hymn for the Reverence of the Lord of Heaven

The *Hymn* may have been composed just before Yi Byeok's parental captivity, not long before his death. Given the circumstances, the vehemence with which the elders of the Yi clan urged Yi Byeok's father and the younger Yi himself to retract from what they perceived as a malign doctrine (惡說), it is not unreasonable to think that both the *Hymn* and the *EST* were written at the same

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54) *SBCP*, 'Mencius', 7A:1.

55) Heb 12:2.

56) *RTAH*, ch. 3, secs. 6, 10, 22.

57) *Ibid.*, ch. 9, secs. 12, 13, 18.

time. While the latter was a more elaborate composition dealing with Neo-Confucian tradition, the former was a song, a call much in the spirit of the fabric of relationships so dear to Neo-Confucianism. It is meant to be a "lesson" (教訓) the common people were promptly urged to learn:

Ye, friends of this world over  
For a moment do pay heed  
To what I have to say:  
As in the household adults lead their life  
So does the King ruling over his dominion.  
As in my body a soul lives within,  
So does in Heaven the Lord on High.  
To one's parents filial piety should be dispensed,  
And loyalty is rightly due before the King.  
Let us keep the three principles and five disciplines  
And above all let us adore the Lord of Heaven.

The relevance of the *Hymn* cannot be overlooked. Yi Byeok candidly alludes to the ethico-religious disputes of his days, and how one should embrace the Lord of Heaven's teaching. The idea of God in this brief text is basically the argument for the "presence" of *Sangje* being co-related with the unreachable presence, hence absence of the King, or to *i*: they cannot be directly seen but ought to be taken for granted. Likewise, in His glory and immanence, the Lord of Heaven could be dimly-perceived. It is the presence *qua* absence, meaningful and allusive to a supreme ruler, or principle as such. It is a 'presence' of a dimly-perceived absence: *munaejae* or as Yi Byeok apprehended in the *EST*, an "apprehensive reverence" (b.5) weighing down from either the royal court, or from Above:

Have you ever seen a child not fathered?  
Is there a sunny spot without shade?  
As you have never been brought before the King's presence  
Does it mean you are not the people of his kingdom?

The King as the Creator is what circumscribes and shades individual existence, or the com-passionate *jeonghan-in*. As the Biblical passage suggests, Heaven "has set eternity within man's heart"<sup>58)</sup>, but the soul has fallen into a state of spiritual

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58) Ecc. 3:11.

ignorance (c.18). Therefore, the sufferer is paradoxically shaded in a process of eternal becoming, out of which only self-realisation (*sudeok*) could rescue him. This process means eternal self-expenditure under the Other: Heaven, the king, whomever rules over the heart, shades it.

Hence, in the realm of dimly-perceived immanence *sudeok* leads the *jeonghan-in* into a state of 'active passivity': the more overshadowed consciousness becomes, the brighter its reflection. A reflection that congeals learning in time, and makes Becoming a cluster of longing, rituals and anxiety. Yi Byeok referred to it by reminding his "friends of this world over" that filial piety should be com-passionately dispensed to one's parents, and loyalty offered unconditionally before the King. He did not equate the Teaching of the Lord of Heaven with a ritualising endowment. Taking heed of tradition, he argued that under Heaven -- and through *sudeok* -- the enlightened *jeonghan-in* is sure to reinforce an existence of apprehension. Like "a man on tip-toe, in reverent expectation"<sup>59</sup>, he longs for the parents, the King and *Sangju*, by keeping the "three principles and the five disciplines" (三綱五倫). Here, Yi Byeok is referring to the *three principles* (三綱) of ethical relationships between sovereign and subject, father and child, and husband and wife; and to the *five disciplines* (五倫) of morality between father and child (親愛), lord and subject (義理), husband and wife (分別), old and young (次序), and amongst friends (信義).

In the *Hymn* Yi Byeok is concerned, on the one hand, with the "soul breathing within" in childish (Mencian) self-expenditure and, on the other, its return to Heaven. This appears not only as a sort of hermeneutical and existential exercise, but as an occasion to exercise "the three principles and five disciplines," ultimately leading to the reverence of *Sangju*, who assumes the character of a volitional Other. *Sangju* brings forth a Heaven-illuminated Mandate, both enlightening the people (天之闢民)<sup>60</sup>, and sending them good or insolent dispositions (天降滔德).<sup>61</sup> So Yi Byeok urged the *seonbi* to heed Heaven, so that

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59) Legge, J., *The She King*, Bk. IV, ode V, 4, p. 305.

60) *Odes, op. cit.*, Bk. II, ode X, 6, p. 502.

61) *Ibid.*, p. 506.

It may dawn on you, once you believe  
That He [*Sangje*] is glory eternal until the end of time.

## V. EST

In this first part of the *EST* we note that Yi Byeok had already become fairly aware of the Teaching of the Lord of Heaven. Hector Diaz observed that a *gyo* (教), teaching, can be understood both as an individual reflection on a doctrine as was the case with Yi Byeok and Dasan's brother Jeong Yak-jong, or in the broader sense of *pogyo* (布教), the social propagation of the teaching.<sup>62)</sup> As happened in Korea and other parts of the world where Catholicism adapted to and was supplemented by other traditions, the result of this coming to an understanding with native traditions was a *gyo* whose vision and appreciation of the world became increasingly deepened and supplemental.<sup>63)</sup>

The Jesuit books Yi Byeok's father sent in from China, the earlier instruction received from Gwon Cheol-sin, and the personal approach to the new doctrine made Yi Byeok a sort of spokesperson for self-cultivation vis-à-vis Seohak. He advocated a teaching practised by "workers, officials, the poor and the rich" alike -- because according to the old Confucian maxim, everyone relates "as a neighbour to one another." As previously discussed, the discussions the Namins initially held at the Cheonjiam Temple were religious gatherings per se. This is made clear in the passage,

Personal prayers and (...) communal offerings:  
Sharing the holy wine

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62) Diaz, H., *A Korean Theology: Chu-Gyo Yo-Ji, Essentials of the Lord's Teaching by Chong Yak-jong Augustine (1760-1801)*, Frankfurt: Immense, Neue Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft, 1986, p. 117.

63) Ibid., p. 148. We can clearly see this in some of Korea's so-called "new religions", as for example Jeungsando (甌山道), Won-Buddhism (圓佛教), and Tongilgyo (統一教), where certain rites and even historical personages, like Matteo Ricci in Jeungsando, became incorporated to their religious hermeneutics and practice.

The assembly was exhorted to practice sincerity  
And this bore testimony to the spread of the Word.

Never 'lacking in seriousness'<sup>64)</sup> Yi Byeok thus naturally emphasised sincerity together with "the spread of the word," particularly amongst his fellow yangban scholars.

As a young scholar he investigated Seohak according to the expression *chimyeong* which appears in the *Analects*. This seems to be confirmed in the dramatic events that marked his final death at thirty-three years of age. As it will be recalled, Yi Byeok faced a very strong resistance from within his own family and clan. His father threatened to commit suicide if the young Yi did not stop investigating Seohak and revering Sangju. The elder Yi had to lock his son up, and it appears that Yi Byeok quickly became sick and passed away without recanting his 'faith.'

In practising sincerity one would 1) give up one's life and 2) investigate *myeong* -- destiny -- to the utmost. Yi Byeok and his Namin friends, as we have seen, tried to deeply investigate the new doctrine and develop their nature, "under the clouds" of the Other. In so doing their wisdom-targeted religious investigation had to necessarily conform to self-expenditure, the 'dying of the self' towards the Other, without room for self-pity or lamentation. This idea Yi Byeok elaborated thus:

In the rain of wisdom, under the clouds of love  
[God's power] spread out for all to see, like thunderbolts.  
The frame he took it onto his back and laid it before an altar  
Thus receiving the sacrificial cask.  
(...)  
[Though] his followers were small and humble,  
They transmitted the ancestral teaching  
[By] working together and helping others.  
Truly, there is no room for lamentation and anxiety.

Despite being baptised by Yi Seung-hun and his ardent defense of Seohak, as the harbinger of the God-event in history through Yaso, Yi Byeok understood the "message" in terms of the highest paradigm he could possibly advocate and try

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64) Legge, J., *Li Ki*, I, p. 61. Quoted in *RTAH*, p. 139.

to emulate: the "practice of sincerity" and *sudeok* made flesh. It would be unproblematic to agree with Ch'eng Hao, for instance, who said that the ancients taught people for no other reason than to enable them to perfect themselves.<sup>65)</sup> Yaso was an 'ancient' who did not have access or interpreted from the Chinese Classics, but he could not be seen as "differing from others"<sup>66)</sup> either. In the end, one may contend, "everything must be traced to its source."<sup>67)</sup> Yi Byeok wrote about a com-passionate return to Heaven, to the mystical nearness of *jiphui* -- or Brilliance.

It is through absolute sincerity (致誠) that the profound person practices and fulfills the "nine thoughts" and learns the way to be sincere. Hence, overriding are the importance and legitimacy of the tradition in which one could be philosophically and religiously able to "attend the judgement." Sincerity becomes not only a 'state-of-being', but rather the sole path one is called to walk and eventually personify as a *seonbi*: the "way to make the self sincere lies in having firm faith in the Way"<sup>68)</sup>; Yi Byeok called his supplemental Way *seongbok* (誠服 a.14).

But how did Yaso personify absolute sincerity, as a virtuous path unfolding from the old books Yi Byeok read -- from the *Four Books and Five Classics* (四書五經) to the realms and kingdoms beyond the Pamirs; from Noah to eighteenth-century Jeoson?

#### a. Personifying Seongbok

We must start from the special emphasis Confucianism ascribed to "sincerity", particularly Chou Tun-i, whom, like Yi Byeok, understood that the

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65) *RTAH*, p. 264.

66) *Ibid.*, ch. 2, sec. 41, ch. 3, sec. 33.

67) *Ibid.*, ch. 9, secs. 12, 13, 18.

68) *Ibid.*, p. 37. This is a paraphrase of the following: "There is a way to be sincere with oneself: If one does not understand what is good, he will not be sincere with himself. Sincerity is the Way of Heaven. To think how to be sincere is the way of man. He who is sincere is one who hits upon what is right without effort and apprehends without thinking. He is naturally and easily in harmony with the Way. Such a man is a sage." *Doctrine of the Mean*, 20:18; in *SBCP*, p. 107.

foundation of national discipline and family harmony are founded on the righteousness of the heart, on sincerity.<sup>69)</sup>

A righteous person does what is proper. He is faithful by heeding his commitments. Through loyalty and faithfulness, according to the *Book of Odes*, the profound person makes uninterrupted efforts and never lacks in seriousness. Like King Wen, he will be able to "ascend and descend on the left and right of God."<sup>70)</sup> These uninterrupted efforts, we can postulate, Yi Byeok saw them within the personal realm of one's "ardent search" -- *min-myeon* -- as we have noted.

In Yi Byeok's religious rendering of Seohak, however, by sincerity he does not simply mean a "subtle, incipient, activating force" which gives rise to "good and evil"<sup>71)</sup>, a view Chu Hsi explained in the *Chu Tzu yü-lei*:

Incipient force means activity at the subtle stage. With activity, good and evil take shape. With sincerity there is no activity, and there is only goodness. With activity there will be both good and evil.<sup>72)</sup>

Yi Byeok speaks of a ceaselessly, self-expending virtue. At this point we may remind ourselves that according to Neo-Confucianism, *ming* (命) was endowed by Heaven, and nature is what the myriad things have received. However, "before the existence of things and affairs, their principles are already present."<sup>73)</sup> Nature, with which humankind was endowed, is grounded on a latent principle which is always good. What makes things and affairs go awry and become bad in some cases, and

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69) *RTAH*, sec. 8, sec.1

70) Legge, J., *The She King*, III, bk I, 1, p. 428.

71) *RTAH*, p. 7

72) *Chu Tzu yü-lei*, 94:27b. Quoted in *RTAH*, p. 7.

73) As Chan Wing-Tsit noted in his translation of the *Chin-ssu lu*, the most important doctrine of "Neo-Confucianism" is *i*, *principle*, a concept not prominent in ancient Neo-Confucianism, but which appears in the commentaries of the *I Ching*. The "Neo-Taoists" of the third and fourth centuries were the first to describe *i* as governing all existence. The School of Principle, Neo-Confucianism, that flourished in the following millennium went on to conceive of *i* on a "metaphysical foundation and a rational basis." See *RTAH*, pp. xviii, 26.



good in other cases is "capacity". Furthermore, what brings things to creation and transformation is the interplay of *Yin* and *Yang*, the material forces. In the sincere path towards sagehood, Chu Hsi contended, "the first thing is to be clear in one's mind, and to know where to go and then to act vigorously in order" to arrive at sagehood.<sup>74)</sup> According to him, this what is meant by the *Doctrine of the Mean's* sentence *jamyeongseong* (自明誠) "sincerity resulting from enlightenment."

According to the *Doctrine of the Mean*, a text Yi Byeok much favoured, sincerity is an endowment the profound person imparted from Heaven. The philosophical grounds for sincerity is to be found in the chapter twenty:

Only those who are absolutely sincere can fully develop their nature. If they can fully develop their nature, they can then fully develop the nature of others. If they can fully develop the nature of others, they can then fully develop the nature of things. If they can fully develop the nature of things, they can assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth. If they can assist in the transforming and nourishing process of Heaven and Earth, they can form a trinity with Heaven and earth.

Mencius asserted that the grounds for the moral mind, or mind-heart, is immanent, but the *Doctrine of the Mean* clearly relates human nature to Transcendence, or rather *munaejae*: human nature is imparted from Heaven.<sup>75)</sup> Because Heaven forms the substance of all things<sup>76)</sup>, one could pose a ceaseless "coming from Heaven" and a "returning to Heaven", and the sincere person is ultimately capable of "assisting in the transforming and nourishing of Heaven and Earth". She would then be able to form a trinity with it. Indeed, "absolute sincerity" is said to be "ceaseless."<sup>77)</sup>

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74) *Chu Tzu yü-lei*, 14 b, and 27b. Quoted in *RTAH*, p. 137.

75) While in the *RTAH ts'ai* (才), "capacity" would be interpreted by Master Ch'eng as an 'element' which arouses from physical nature and can therefore, be weak or strong, enlightened or beclouded, Mencius understood *ts'ai* coming from one's original nature, thus qualifying it as always good. *The Book of Mencius*, 6A: 6. See *RTAH*, p. 30.

76) *The Doctrine of the Mean*, ch. 16. 'To form the substance of things' in this book was rendered from the expression *chaemul* (體物).

Be this as it may, the point we wish to stress is that "everything must be traced to its source." But the 'ceaseless', insofar as it appears in the *EST*, returns to Heaven out of a com-passionate step towards the self-expenditure. Chu Hsi's view of sincerity is what enables us to conceive of it as self-expenditure, a step towards "extension of knowledge" and Becoming: the *seong-in* investigates principle in things, "in humankind's concrete living conditions", as Yi Byok put. But the "conditions" always spin

the created thread within one's heart, [which]

In its being abstruse, betokens a well of mystery.<sup>78)</sup>

This way of looking at *seongbok* or absolute sincerity -- a "well of mystery" -- is, beyond Chu Hsi's "extension of knowledge", the basis for Yi Byeok's moral ontology and it underlines his rendering of the person of Yaso, whose Becoming "overflowed in perfection... facing death."

According to the Neo-Confucianism of Yi Byeok's times, "extension of knowledge" had already been systematised by Chou Tun-i, amongst others, in the *Chin-ssu lu* -- *Reflections on Things at Hand*<sup>79)</sup> -- which presents the entire 'School of Principle' in a short survey, as an anthology. The person who makes no distinction between herself and others, it is said, could grow so extensively as to enable her to form one body with Heaven, Earth and all things. But, as Yaso is portrayed in the *EST*, to 'make no distinction between oneself and others' is tantamount to self-expenditure under the Other:

The merciless spanking he went through;

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77) *Op. cit.*, ch. 26. Perhaps this is in reference to the hexagram *bok* (復) in the *I Ching*, which says that "in seven days it will return", thus pointing to the principle of production and reproduction in nature which is ceaseless. For the commentary on hexagram no. 24, "*bok*" (fu), see Legge, J., *Yi King*, p. 233.

78) *EST*, c.6.

79) According to Chan Wing-tsit, the *Chin-ssu lu* is the "most important single work of philosophy produced in the Far East during the second millennium A.D". As the "major work of rationalistic wing of Neo-Confucianism", it could be contrasted with Wang Yang Ming's *Intructions on Practical Living*, its "idealistic wing." See *RTAH*, p. ix.

The vinegar given to quench his thirst, and  
His fibulae gradually bartered;  
But his love becoming ever greater,  
[despite his being put to death.] (b.14)

Hence, it seems unquestionable that the quality of sincerity was a paramount concern. The righteousness of heart, e.g., sincerity, was the foundation for governing the family, the country and bringing peace to the whole world, a topic Yi Byeok introduced in the next segment, "Tradition".

As someone whose supplemental interpretation of Catholic teaching has become eclipsed by the 'righteousness of heart' under Heaven, Yi Byeok sees Yaso both in the traditional role of God's rescuer to a "world filled with evil", and as the incarnated spirit of "absolute sincerity", who as a "child of the Spirit" returned to and participated in the realm of "the five elements." Hence, Yaso could be said to 'know his nature', and consequently also to know Heaven.

In the wake of self-expenditure, however, the child of the Spirit also become the *jeonghan-in*, as can be seen from the passage above: love as death that can give birth to arresting light. Yi Byeok supplemented his theological investigation of Catholic teaching by also emphasising 'extension of knowledge', for one must always remember that Yaso "was conversant with the old tradition"<sup>80)</sup> and "experienced bitter suffering before ascending to Heaven and being glorified."<sup>81)</sup> Hence, the return to one's original home (本家), carries in itself the existential ebb of scholarship, love and grief. This was the paradigmatic duty Yaso explored and transcended by abounding in "seongbok." Thus, Yi Byeok writes that Yaso overflowed in *Seongyeong* (盛盈), self-perfection.<sup>82)</sup>

Since the *seong-in* can know Heaven by investigating things in order to extend her knowledge and thus make the will sincere, what part would a historical savior play in her personal life, as self-cultivation is the root of Becoming? What need does she have for a rescuer in order to manifest a clear character, love the

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80) *EST*, a.10.

81) *EST*, b.14.

82) *EST*, a.11.

people and abide in the highest good? These questions do not seem less important to the overall Yaso's personal discipline of com-compassion and self-expenditure. In this regard, Yi Byeok seems taken in the 'tremendous fascination' Yaso himself personified. As a tremendous fascination synonymous with *cheom* one could posit Heaven as being "always the other, lending himself, however, to unity; [it] is neither this one nor that one, and nonetheless it is to [Heaven] alone that each time, I owe everything, including the loss of myself."<sup>83)</sup>

Yi Byeok endorsed the image of a Yaso who both 'lost himself' and "observed the rites and propriety." His teaching "added up to the blessings of the world." The "child of the Spirit" was the dragon "without beginning or end" -- paradoxically crafted beyond Becoming. The rule of the Kingdom of Heaven rested upon him, a claim certainly no profound person had ever made. Yaso was "conversant with the old tradition", and like all great 'transmitters' of Confucianism, his was a mission of renewing the old custom. And since there is no harm "in differing from others in the interpretation of the Classics"<sup>84)</sup>, tradition was flexible enough to accommodate new interpretations.

Yaso, however, did not come to question or invalidate Tradition. His mission was confined to a "ruined universe" in need of reconstruction. Yaso's coming, Yi Byeok argued, was one that reflected Sangje's ultimate compassion for humankind. Yaso was the *seong-in* who by "taking to himself the misfortune of this foolish generation" (a.4), lived it up as a *jeonghan-in*, for he was "earnest in ties of affection."<sup>85)</sup> Therefore, his discipline -- *seongbok* -- ought to be emulated. In this sense the sincere person, personified by Jesus, could be reconciled with a basic Confucian tenet: the *seong-in* "does not serve kings or lords, but [her] aim may be a model to others."<sup>86)</sup> It is com-compassion, sub-mission, and the law: the "passivity of a past which has never been, come back again."<sup>87)</sup> It is revisited as tradition is

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83) Blanchot, M., *op. cit.*, p. 13.

84) *RTAH*, ch.2, sec. 41; ch.3, sec. 33.

85) *RTAH*, VI:5, p. 172.

86) This is a passage in the *Book of Changes* translated by James Legge, p. 291. Cf. *RTAH*, VII: 8, p. 185.

reviewed by its luminaries. Yaso was one such a luminary, who forged his teaching under the privilege of the Other. It is over this com-passionate person whose heart is overshadowed by Heaven that the Eternal shades afflicted existence in the scintillating promise of salvation:

*if one loses sight of salvation what shall become of their suffering?  
Hence, people should keep a heart of devotion [信心 sinsim] in order to  
overcome human misery -- even if the initial rearing of sinsim be  
hardened by suffering. (c.16)*

Indeed, living as a *jeonghan-in* profoundly illuminated Yaso's *sinsim*: the Christ was a historical *seong-in* who, once establishing his seriousness and righteousness, could overcome all violations of an evil world. He could be said to entertain "no doubts about his conduct."<sup>88)</sup> Having no doubts about his own conduct. However, Yaso did more than any profound person, Yi Byeok says, for the Nazarene took to "himself the misfortune" by infinitely resigning himself "through all sufferings."

The universal decree, as great as the hexagram *wu-wang* (无妄), would mean that the *seong-in*, Yaso, become a rescuing *jeonghan-in*, a person "hardened by suffering": in order to rescue all people he gave himself in sacrifice in 'wu-wang', i.e., in perfect absence of falsehood. As a sacrificial vessel "taking his stance as righteousness requires, [he adhered] firmly to Heaven's decrees."<sup>89)</sup>

Yi Byeok wrote that "whoever practices virtue seeking a reward ends up loosing righteousness in a whirl of emptiness" (a.8). But, as we noted, he was not interested in turning against the radical ethical premise to which he subscribed, so as to explain or justify the origin of evil or the metaphysical sageness of Yaso to the *seonbi*. Because he understood that people should believe in and yearn for "this Seok", e.g., the Historical Buddha -- Yaso himself -- who abounded both in perfection and *han*, the 'mythical' origin of sin was less emphasised. Thus he and

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87) Blanchot, M., *op. cit.*, p. 17.

88) Legge, J., *Yi King*, p. 420.

89) *I Ching* 50: Sacrificial Vessel.

his Neo-Confucian-Catholic interpretation were open to a systematic attack from the orthodox version of Neo-Confucianism that dominated the learned circles in Joseon, as we saw in the last chapter.

In conclusion, Yi Byeok tried to make room for a belief, already deeply imbedded in the popular tradition, in which the *seonbi* sometimes took refuge. It is curious to note how he tried to undermine Buddhism, and at the same time supersede the Buddhism-*cum*-Mugyo belief in a universal savior: the rescuer's path was one hardened by suffering. It appears that like Ricci in his early days of Ming China, Yi Byeok had to naturally count on and associate his hermeneutics with the local religious traditions, from the meetings in a Buddhism temple to the ubiquitous terminology Catholic doctrine borrowed from it. While Ricci argued along the lines that stressed the superior validity the Lord's Teaching, as compared to Buddhism which he dismissed as utter folly, Yi Byeok was more of a suave iconoclast, for indeed he called Yaso "this *Seok*", though

The idol Asura shall become just  
[Another statute of] copper, iron, stone and wood.  
But if awareness cuts through, all delusions will be shattered:  
By heeding his words let us renew the [old] custom.

In this light, Yi Byeok has firmly grounded devotion (*simsin*) on the "awareness [which] cuts through all delusions", be these religious, political, economic, or social ones. Above all, it was necessary to renew the old tradition, which to him had become "Pharisee"-like.

b. *Milmaeng: The Path of Self-Expenditure*

The tradition Yi Byeok belonged to was of course composed of society's basic strata, if only conveniently described in their respective roles, duties or practices. The farmers, inspired by the "sincerity" that makes them plough the earth and earn good crops should fear what tomorrow could bring, the "last judgement." Always hoping that the earth produced a bountiful harvest, they naturally harbour eschatological hopes. The workers, on the other hand, manufacture out of practice but in ignorance of what should be their real concern, the path of righteousness. The merchants should know that in

their nomadic excursions throughout the provinces they had better store their money in Heaven.

Yi Byeok's worldview took up the three main stems of the Neo-Confucianism ethical code: family, nation and the whole world. In a society chronically oblivious of the needy and the downcast, he taught that inhumanness should stop, for all classes shared of the same mandate, or endowment. The whole world was under the same Unseen King whom he had sketchily described in the *Hymn*, and so he could explain what may have brought the Jesuits to the East: the same Sangju, or Lord of Heaven. Despite his acerbic criticism of the *seonbi*, as we have briefly noted, he accepted the fact that the highest class, the "prepared people", had the responsibility for governing the country. To the king loyalty should be given so as to actualise sincerity, as he is the one under whom the people should receive guidance and care.

Tradition is naturally the soil in which new interpretations, all phenomenal existence have their roots. Yaso's life of sincerity, traditionally interpreted in what became an existential cipher for transcendental existence, gave relief to the idea of the Creator: from physical suffering towards a sort of love which becomes "ever greater" (b.14). Transcendental existence -- the Idea of God -- overshadowing the sympathetic *seonbi*, keeps life suspended in dimly-perceived immanence, and that in the end sets incarnation beyond compassion and annihilation towards absolute sincerity (致誠) or self-expending righteousness:

**He acted in righteousness and overcame violations. (a.7)**

*Yaso's path and his teaching can guide the people in the service of the king, by fostering a heart of rectitude thus making the will sincere. One should reflect whether this path is truthful or not.*  
(c.19)

Yi Byeok seeks a heart of rectitude, the perpetual return to Heaven, i.e. "nourished by obedience -- or in his own terms, *milmaeng* (密盟), which evokes "the solemn oath one takes to heart" (b.11). The way the *seonbi* incarnates this path is equivalent to dramatic self-expenditure. Commenting on this topic, Lévinas wrote:

the drama of existence is not only that existence is divided into choices



between desires but that existence is also suspended between the Law [*chimyong*] that is given me and my nature, which is incapable of submitting to the Law without constraint. It is not freedom which defines the human being. It is obedience which defines him.<sup>90)</sup>

The *seong-in*, the obedient soul, falls under the face of the other free being, who "belongs to the very meaning of the Infinite."<sup>91)</sup> Thus, there occurs a transcendence, a departure from being: "an approach of the neighbour without a recovery of breath, to the point of being substituted for him."<sup>92)</sup> The Yi Byeok's *seong-in*, or else Yi Byeok himself, faces the Other who reveals existence in one's "responsibility as a hostage."<sup>93)</sup>

One falls hostage in time; in obedience or "docile virtue." Hence, the potential loss of self; self-expenditure "more passive than any passivity", as Lévinas put it<sup>94)</sup>. A loss similar to the Ciceronian *ἀπαθεία*: "it is impossible that I should have to bear this loss for much longer, and any suffering that is short-lived should be tolerable, even if it is great."<sup>95)</sup> Suspended between the Law and his own nature, one realises that passivity means infinite proximity under the Other. This is the sincere path of *milmaeng*.

Regarding *milmaeng*, Yi Byeok dedicated an entire verse to "sincerity." In this important though somehow cryptic passage, he brings to the fore the alliance of sincerity with the so-called path of righteousness, *jeongdo*. Yi Seong-bae did not fail to observe that the metaphysical intertwining of *seong* with *jeongdo* was best exemplified by Christ, himself the paradigm of sincerity, who lived the path of righteousness. Consequently, the path, the metaphysical centrality, *qua* the commonality

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90) Lévinas, E., *Nine Talmudic Readings*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990, p. 161.

91) Lévinas, E. *Of God who Comes to Mind*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998, p.9.

92) *Ibid.*, p. 10.

93) *Ibid.*, p. 51.

94) *Ibid.*, 50. For the notion of a passivity prior to consciousness and reflection, see E. Lévinas, *Otherwise than Being or Beyond Essence*, Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1991, pp.48-56, 109-113.

95) Powell, J.G.F., *Cicero: Laelius, On Friendship & The Dream of Scipio*, XXVII, p. 104. Warmister: Aris&Phillips Ltd, Teddington House, 1990.

of the possible human response mirrored on earth, has become incarnation. His emphasis was on to the historical and ontological reflection of which Yaso could be taken as a golden ray. But Yi Byeok was not wholly concerned with or indoctrinated in Christian religion per se, although he did research and deeply meditated on the sources brought to him from China. He thoroughly sank -- to borrow some of the terminology used by Yi Byeok himself -- in what we would suggest was Yaso's historically personal disciple of compassion (a.10). On being absolutely sincere, Yaso took up the cup of sorrows and made a "solemn oath", *milmaeng*. In this, Yi Byeok would seem to lend some measure of support to the moral religion of Christ both Lessing and, to a lesser degree Kant, subscribed. Consequently, our attention should fall not so much on sincerity as ultimate perfection -- a tautology of sorts --, but rather on com-*passion* which sincerity must have forged between Heaven and Earth, because the *seong-in* sweats from the heart.<sup>96)</sup>

Making com-*passion* less of a representation than an existential cipher in the path of the righteous person, Yi Byeok turned to some of the preferred notions of Neo-Confucianism. Naturally, he started by paraphrasing the *Doctrine of the Mean*: the human individual is endowed with talents. The *seong-in* should mature according to the truth of the age, in history, so as to expedite the course of righteous history, one's "ardent search" and *susin*.

By *susin* or self-cultivation Yi Byeok meant not only the learning of traditional precepts, for self-cultivation -- in the metaphysical sense reached by Yi Byeok in the *EST* -- must encompass both an uplifting and dying of the self towards and under the Other. The *seong-in* lives com-*passion* itself, as her love becomes "even greater, despite [her] being put to death." Likewise, the *seonbi* should long for and truly seek after the path of righteousness, making a solemn oath, or else face ruin.

Yi Byeok was particularly critical of the *seonbi*, the scholarly class, because, in his view, they had a "contempt to what [was] heartfelt and sincere", i.e., to the dimly-perceived immanent relationship, which Kierkegaard also called God-relationship. Because "virtue is not an isolated instance"<sup>97)</sup> Yi Byeok understood that he should share

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96) Yi S. B., *Yugyo wa Gurisudogyo -- Yi Byeok ui Hangukjeok Sinhak Wolli (Confucianism and Christianity -- The Principles of Yi Byeok's Korean Theology)*, Seoul: Bundochulpansa, 1979, p. 94, note 83.

97) *Analects* 4:25.

or renew his supplemental views *qua* orthodoxy. He thought he had to reach out to the seonbi. And so he tried, and was promptly consumed: tradition is essentially *ts'ai*, "capacity", in the sense understood by Master Ch'eng, but Yi Byeok was reinterpreting it as infinite resignation *qua* Heaven and heterodoxy. As *milmaeng*.

But how to transform a collapsed path into a plateau of rectitude -- in *pyeonjo*, "transformation-in-harmony"(c.2)? The *seong-in*, it seems, must per force walk and overcome the earthen pathway in the salvific road offered to the *jeonghan-in*, and reach beyond the precipice of all phenomenal incarnation: "if one loses sight of salvation what shall become of their suffering?"(c.15) The seonbi Yi Byeok seems to imply, ought to heed *this* path of righteousness.

## VI. Conclusion

Yi Byeok composed the *EST* with a premise reminiscent of Heidegger: one is "unintentionally thrown in the world" (c.1). Separation from the Source (*geunwon*) -- and not sin pure and simple -- is to be overcome. So long as 'unintentional thrownness' can inspire the seonbi to muster the strength to "investigate the secret principles" and cherish an "ardent search", he can religiously envision "footprints" tracing back to "an eminent Source."

This is the path of the sincere person, synonymous with "infinite resignation", *islam* -- surrender. But the ardent search is not a transcendental return in or by itself. In spite of being sought in *munaeye*, it can only be reflected "in humankind concrete living conditions." One ought to follow what on earth, in 'nature', has become dimly perceived or mirrored: the "vestiges of [a] creative process" initiated by *Sangju*, and concretely reflected in and by Yaso, the person of sincerity (*seong-in*) who perfectly reflected "bursts of passionate grief" as a person of com-compassion (*jeonghan-in*). This is what we have tried to show in Yi Byeok's interpretation of the *seonbi* Yaso, and the supplemental idea of God he formulated within the paradigmatic confines of his Neo-Confucian tradition.

If in Chu Hsi's ineffable concept of the Absolute, *i* occupies a main locus, the locus meant by Ricci and Yaso is a volitional *Sangju* (上主), the Lord of Heaven, much in the way the *Book of Odes* describes *Sangje* (上帝), the Lord on High. The *seong-in* should com-passionately return to *Sangju* in her "ardent

search", "through a heart of sincere commitment." She reflects on the things that ensnare the senses: transiency, delusions and transgressions. Yi Byeok suggests that even if "hardened by suffering", the human soul should yearn for the realm of "eternal blessing": the reverential nearness of *Sangju*, as she gazes at Heaven above, and the concreteness of suffering in nature below.

*Sangju*, the Source, cannot but be nebulously contemplated in nature. So Yi Byeok talks about contemplation of the physical "blue" Heaven which Dasan had discussed in his work. Yi Byeok introduced Heaven as such, to point out what he called "transformation-in-harmony." The *seonbi* can see that the harmonious transformation adds up to the "work of *Sangju*": the wonders of nature, the mountains and streams which are a "magnificent work" for the soul 'thrown' into a world both beautiful and transiently bedeviled, the "ruined universe."

Human beings, Yi Byeok argues, have adopted not a 'nature-like' beauty, but "cleverish looks." Consequently, the *seong-in*, in her supplemental knowledge of *Sangju*, ought to transcend the skin-deep realm of transiency. There is more to be tapped from human nature. There is a thread running through the heart. Human beings are faced with an overwhelming Other, and a creation they hold in awe and cannot "fathom properly." Their search cannot be analytical, but allegorical:

Words and figures of speech  
Were followed by miracles.

This vast frontier -- There,  
Even the most recondite lies within.  
(...) what one cherishes is the value veiled within.

A search deeply reverential, in which the person of sincerity, hardened by the works of suffering, self-expendingly weaves sage teaching into the fabric of life. In *cheom*:

How much more so should we heed what is vast  
Widely flourishing and boundless,  
Weaving Brilliance, the unfathomable, and  
Thus glimpse the Face of the Creator.

One falls prostrated on bent knees.

Yi Byeok's idea of God is not of a Being who can be proven through apodictic reasoning -- like the creator of a bronze globe -- but a God of bent knees. Like a woman in almost perpetual travail, murmuring:

*Through days and months,  
I have been longing and longing.  
The way is far.  
When will he return?*

## Conclusion

### 1. The Tradition of Enlightening Others

In the *EST* Yi Byeok introduced the *seonbi* to a supplemental idea of Sangju, the Lord of Heaven, by stressing or invoking similarities between traditions so as to make his hermeneutical rendition meaningful and, he hoped, acceptable. The path he underscored was one of self-cultivation which deliberately pointed to the enlightening of others.

From Yi Byeok's own hermeneutics, one can derive that it was not in spite of the existence of different religious traditions, but in the wake of these traditions that the *seonbi* could launch and entertain his "ardent search" towards a Tradition-embedded idea of God. Taking this as the point of departure, he urged the *seonbi* to revere specifically the true 'Buddha', Yaso, whom he called "this Seok." But it is important to note that Yi Byeok wrote the *EST* by following the poetic structure of the *Book of Odes*. We know that the odes were recited aloud or even sung. It is impossible to dissociate motives, themes and images from the particular experiences that shaped the books -- or 'decades' -- of each individual period or personage that appear in the *Odes*. For example, we read in the 'Odes of P'ei':

The two youths got into their boats,	二子乘舟
Whose shadows floated about [on the water].	汎汎其景
I think lovingly of them,	願言思子
And my heart is tossed about in uncertainty.	中心養養

The two youths got into their boats,	二子乘舟
Which floated away [on the stream].	汎汎其逝
I think lovingly of them; -	願言思子
Did they not come to harm?	不暇有害

This ode surmises the death of the two sons of a duke. The poet sings a dirge for what is truly a tragic end. One brother, Show, tries to warn the other, Keih-tsze, of the imminent death trap he would fall if he remained in the State.

Keih-tsze is adamant about his fate and decided to stay. Show would then made his brother drunk and impersonate him by taking his boat, only to be subsequently murdered. When Keih-tsze learned about his brother's death he too took a boat to mourn him, only to be subsequently murdered by the same assailants. Likewise, when one reads the *EST* in its entirety, it is very hard to think (忖) of virtue and self-expenditure and not associate them with the 'tragic boat' Yi Byeok fatefully took by deciding to stay his course and impersonate sincerity, or self-expenditure (誠敬) the way he did in "very tender renunciation" (雍和順), as he put. That is the tradition he set to follow, by questing after the course of self-expenditure.

As we have endeavoured to argue, tradition-embeddedness was something Ricci himself attempted to demonstrate in the *True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven*. In fact, both the concept of *doek* -- virtue -- and Sangje, the anthropomorphic Lord on High appear in early Chou documents:

The people of Chou honor ceremonies and highly value the conferring of favours. They serve the spiritual beings and respect them, but keep them at a distance. They remain near to man and loyal to him."<sup>1)</sup>

But Sangje, once understood as a spiritual being whom King Wen attended, became synonymous with the more naturalistic notion of Heaven, *cheon*. Eventually, the doctrine of the Mandate of Heaven gained the attention of scholars and the emperors: *doek* could determine the fate of all under Heaven. Both Cheng Hsüan (127-200) and Chu Hsi (1130-1200) considered that the Mandate of Heaven pointed to the Way, or better said, to *cheondo*, the moral order. This had been previously elaborated by Confucius who taught that man can make the Tao great, and not the "Way can make man great."<sup>2)</sup>

Yi Byeok intellectually followed the traditional interpretation of *doek*., which, also understood as righteousness, was a concept opposed to personal gain or profit, a "whirl of emptiness." In his view, *cheondo* (天道) was synonymous with *seongdo* (誠道), the path the person of sincerity (誠人) takes, as she heeds the Mandate and

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1) Legge, J., *Li Ki*, vol I, p. 342.

2) *Analects*, 15:28.



is all the more reverential before the unfathomable brilliance of a volitional, rather than naturalistic Heaven. Thus, one receives the Mandate not in a position of grace, but of intellectual-cum-spiritual apprehension. Yi Byeok used many expressions to refer to it: *bu* (卜付), *sonhwang* (悚惶), *chukjeok* (蹶蹶), *angmo gwanbu* (仰慕觀附); or, in a word, apprehensive reverence (寅). He meant apprehension arousing from the individual who engages in self-cultivation ultimately rendering him self-expending, to the realm of the family, nation and the whole world. The epitome of apprehensive self-cultivation was Yaso, the Nazarene.

In the *Book of Odes* it is said that Heaven looked down upon the house of Chou and sent Chung Shan-fu, the Marquis of Fan, a very virtuous man, to help King Hsüan (r. 827-782 BCE).<sup>3)</sup> Comparatively speaking, both the Marquis of Fan and Yaso were sent out to a world out of balance, to a "ruined universe." To use a Pauline expression, they brought the "cup of blessing"<sup>4)</sup> -- *koinonia* -- so that "its light reaches the people below."<sup>5)</sup>

*Koinonia* is a term in New Testament Greek "for sharing and being sensitive to the needs of others, as well as for the relationships, associations and Christians communities in which such sharing is practiced."<sup>6)</sup> This may have been what Moonjang Lee had in mind when he introduced the notion of "*Jonshin*" (sic), the "Spirit of Teaching" which, he argues, is "the guiding spirit that a person embodied through his life and work, [and it should] be remembered, followed and transmitted from generation to generation."<sup>7)</sup> However, once defined as a "guiding spirit" communally shared and transmitted throughout generations, one may rather call it a teaching (*gyo*, 教). Once informed by *sudeok* and *koinoia*, it can be understood in the narrower sense of a self-expending virtue. Hector Diaz spoke of

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3) *Book of Odes*, ode 260.

4) I Cor 10.

5) *Book of Odes*, ode 260.

6) *The Modern Catholic Encyclopedia*, Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1994, p. 424.

7) Lee, M., *The Historical Jesus and Mokmin Hermeneutics with Reference to the Description of Jesus in Minjung Theology in Korea*, Ph.D dissertation, unpublished, New College, The University of Edinburgh, 1996, p. 1.

in his study of Jeong Yak-jong Augustine.<sup>8)</sup> This was the case with Yi Byeok's interpretation of Yaso, who abounded both in *seong* (誠) and *jeongghan* (情恨), self-expenditure. The 'apprehensive' seonbi ought to emulate Yaso insofar as he becomes enlightened to the soul-disclosing path of the teaching of the Lord of Heaven.

The Namins, a political party to which Yi Byeok belonged, were reduced to a few pockets isolated in the country, particularly in Gyeonggi province. Some seemed imbued with the spirit of *koinonia* leading them to congregate and re-assemble whenever possible and necessary. They were imbued with the *jeongsin* of clan and family, which permeated and underpinned social groupings and relationships. We have noted that Yi Byeok's family was related to Dasan by marriage. We also noted how the family patriarchs attempted to induce Yi Byeok to recant his religious, supplemental *jeongsin* by threatening to abrogate his family branch (族譜) in its entirety. This was an extreme act taken in extraordinary circumstances, since Yi Byeok thought the teaching he had researched and found meaning had a captivating halo to it -- even if, or because, as he put, "han deeply penetrates and calmly sits in the heart."

Therefore, when some eminent Namin scholars more directly went down the path of religious ardour, the community came to a crossroads: Seohak and its Teaching of the Lord of Heaven meant more than scientific advances and social restoration. If, on the one hand, it enhanced the seonbi's awareness regarding Western thought and technology, on the other it frontally challenged the status quo by unorthodoxly supplementing the traditional, impersonal interpretation of Heaven with Sangju, the Lord of Heaven. Yi Byeok urged the seonbi to investigate the vestiges of Sangju's creative process "through a heart of sincere commitment." Indeed, the person whose *jeongsin* was supplemented by Seohak should more easily discern the "footprints" tracing "back to an eminent Source."

But the *seong-in* does not live her philosophical or religious engagement in sheer ostracism, like Dasan once did in Gangjin county (康津郡), detached from the

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8) Diaz, H., *A Korean Theology: Chu-gyo Yo-Ji, Essentials of the Lords Teaching by Chong Yak-jong Augustine (1760-1801)*, Frankfurt: Immense Neue Zeitschrift fur Missionswissenschaft, 1986, vol. 35. p. 117.

web of relationships so highly praised in Confucianism. Like a meercat, she cannot live away from the community, without which her *jeongsin* becomes deranged; it becomes *myeong-wan* (冥頑 c.18), i.e., a condition in which one falls short of the 'web of relationships', and spirituality (不靈). Hence, Yi Byeok makes explicit that it is within the mantle of Tradition that the *seong-in* ought to share the "cup of blessing":

And now [one comes] to the Teaching of Gidok  
Which added up to the blessings of the world.<sup>9)</sup>

Confronted with a foreign doctrine that called for the recognition of the old Chou concept of Sangje, and explicitly identified his heavenly emissary as Yaso, the established order took sides and flared up in defense of orthodoxy. In Joseon, Seohak and its practitioners were strongly resisted, despite or precisely because "by nature men are alike. Through practice they have become far apart."<sup>10)</sup> Yet, Yi Byeok emphasised similarities, all the more aware of his growing alienation within the walls of orthopraxis, which, paradoxically, meant to him *koinonia*, or else *chiseong* (致誠): only those who are absolutely sincere can transform others by "sharing the cup" -- or the "boat" -- of self-expenditure. Hence, by supplementing themselves with the Teaching of the Lord of Heaven they would automatically seek to fall under the grace of the Other so as to weave them into the orbit of *Seonggyo* (聖教) -- Sage Teaching, as Yaso is said to have done in the *EST*. This was the *jeongsin* Yi Byeok cultivated in his own tradition and presented in his work, which he supplemented vis-à-vis Seohak. This is what we tried to argue in the discussion of the *EST*.

We have noted that once thrown in a "ruined universe", the individual soul faces the Other.<sup>11)</sup> Yi Byeok depicts the reverent seonbi as being able to gaze at the Face of the Creator: in apprehensive reverence (寅) and *koinonia*. Clearly, the idea

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9) *EST*, a.3

10) *Analects*, 17:2.

11) *EST*, a.12

of God -- or Sangju (上主) as it appears in the *EST* -- is partly abstracted from the *TMLH*, and partly a pertinent elaboration on traditional sources, like the *Book of Odes*. It depicts the wonders of Providence, and the works of Nature. But in the *EST* Yi Byeok presented the idea of God as com-compassion and equated it with self-expenditure: Sangju is dimly perceived in com-passionate bursts of love-pain, or *jeonghan*:

*Sangju arranged for the descent of the rescuer into a world filled with evil. He took pity of the people who cannot attain redemption and so He sent his son as the rescuer of the whole world.<sup>12)</sup>*

This is what we have attempted to show in this thesis. If Ricci's Lord of Heaven -- Sangje (上帝) -- was the father of all intellects, for Yi Byeok the Lord on High (Sangju), through the Nazarene, weaves a web of brilliance wrapped in pathetic self-expenditure (*sudeok*), itself "an instrument" he further associated with the Nazarene, as the bond of love-pain (愛痛). Hence, the actualisation of *sudeok* opens one's path to a heartfelt sense of reverence and dimly-perceived immanence (*munaejae*). *Sudeok*, played as *jeonghan*, is always for the sake of the Other, the Source of love-pain or *munaejae*:

*[People] ought to practice sudeok for the sake of Sangju, for it is a precious instrument.<sup>13)</sup>*

## 2. Prospect and Recommended Research on the Subject

While this study does not purport to establish the foundations for Yi Byeok's supplemental theology, it tentatively tried to dwell on the notions of *jeonghan* and *sudeok*, as a holistic means to follow through with our analysis of the *EST*. One may contend that this perspective supplementally grounds itself on the Buddhist notion of com-compassion (慈悲) practised by the 'religious' *seonbi* as

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12) *EST*, a.3

13) *EST*, c.9

self-expenditure, and the traditional Confucian paradigm of self-cultivation (修身). But this was a Weltanschauung riddled with difficulties, as An Jeong-bok pointed out. since Cheonjuhak was "a simulacrum for what it considers as an elevated view":

According to Cheonjugyo [Catholicism], those who observe the will of Heaven and love one another as God loves the world will be rewarded, and those who disobey and do people harm will be punished as in Mo Tzu's doctrine of universal love. Mo Tzu's heaven is concerned with the present world, whereas the heaven of those who have embraced Cheonjugyo leads to the world of the future. If compared to the former, the latter is truly false and germane to Buddhism.

Consequently An thought that Cheonjuhak could not compare with other teachings. However, it would not be an exaggeration to argue that any religious discourse in East Asia -- and particularly in Korea -- which does not take in account *sudeok*, as a means to self-cultivation and *koinonia*, as the only position path towards the realm of unification, cannot do justice to the Korean historical experience of 'love-pain' (愛痛), i.e., pathos and soul -- its *jeonghan*.

Nonetheless, at this point in the theological universe of Korea, perhaps there seems to be little one can expect from the established Christian churches in terms of a supplemental discourse amongst traditions in terms of *koinonia*. Christian churches have become the private flock of zealous *moksanim*s (ministers). One observes, not without consternation, that die-hard Christian attacks against Buddhist temples, for example, and even against Dangun, the mythical founder of the nation, have become noticeable events.<sup>14)</sup>

There are exceptions, of course, albeit academic ones in nature. The theologian Yun Seong-beom sought to establish the foundations for a Christian-Confucian theology, largely grounded on the seminal notion of *seong* (誠), sincerity.<sup>15)</sup> From a Protestant viewpoint, what he proposes is very challenging and research on his idea regarding a supplemental hermeneutics between the two

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14) See article on the subject, 'Korean shamans blame Christian extremists for raid on royal tomb', *The Guardian*, July 15, 1999, p.20.

15) Yun, S. B., *Song ui Shinhak* (Theology of Sincerity), Seoul: Seoul Munhwasa, 1976.

traditions, insofar as it allows for *koinonia* to impregnate the spirit with *seong*, should be praised and strongly encouraged. Indeed, he seems to have embraced a Theology of *Seong* which, in the context of *jeonghan* may further enhance the kind of *myeongsang* -- meditation -- referred to in the *Foreword*. An engaging meditation which could be perhaps collectively espoused as a form of com-passionate "Christian Confucianism" (基督的儒教):

While Christianity, on the one hand, should find the ethical spirit of Confucianism and should be supplemented with the spirit of filial piety, Confucianism, on the other hand, should be stirred by the Christian truth of serving Heaven and regain its religious [vital strength]. Christianity and Confucianism should open the door of dialogue and realize the limit of [their] own religious tradition with a broken heart. Christian Confucianism is keenly related to the Korean tradition of enlightening others (弘益人間) which has never hurt others or other nations.<sup>16)</sup>

We have attempted to argue that the "tradition of enlightening others" was finely aligned in Yi Byeok's rediscovering and practise of self-expenditure in his short, tragic life as a "boatman" for Christian Confucianism. In *jeonghan*, he redefined and refined the "tradition of enlightening others" by actualising *sudeok* through the concrete channels of self-expenditure. Yaso, also understood as an pioneer, was profoundly immersed in Tradition:

To the royal palace [Yaso] went as a young man;  
And at the assembly received the Scriptures  
And by all *seonbi* was duly recognised;  
For his knowledge was truly extensive  
And he observed the rites and propriety.<sup>17)</sup>

However, progress in the direction of a Christian Confucianism cannot be achieved other than through self-expending *sudeok*, as practiced by Yaso, Yi Byeok and a generation of Namin scholars. Indeed, Yi Byeok tells us that "Yaso came as the

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16) Yun S. B., 'Christian Confucianism as an Attempt at a Korean Indigenous Theology', *The Northeast Asia Journal of Theology*, nos. 24/25, 1980, p. 110.

17) *EST*, a.3.

rescuer of the whole world, even in the pitiable situation of facing death."<sup>18)</sup> The idea of God the Nazarene planted in the world, Yi Byeok wrote, was *gwae* (匱), "the brilliant promise accomplished through death."<sup>19)</sup> A brilliance, one may conclude, that weaves itself into the fabric not of death per se, but of a self-expending, supplemental *Essence of Sage Teaching* the seonbi is urged to don.

Finally, we have said that *chiseong* -- absolute sincerity -- perfects the "relation between father and son", or the "ties of affection" which are rooted in Nature (Heaven). This is an old idea that appears in the *Classic of Filial Piety*. Towards the end of the *EST*, Yi Byeok resumes his theological interpretation of the idea of God by writing that, "First and foremost one should reflect absolute sincerity towards Sangje." However, Confucius himself was vague about 'the fundamental principles of the universe,' insofar as these can be clearly apprehended as a cornerstone for the self-expending relationship between God and human beings. He could not introduce God -- Sangje -- as the Parent of human beings, nor did he teach the norms of human life in attending Him, as Yi Byeok revealed in the *EST*:

By attending Heaven with reverential shame (僞倂蹴踏)  
One shall gradually restore (俊) spiritual ignorance (冥頑).

Hence, the relationship between God and the seonbi should be a parent-child relationship. And as one gradually restores spiritual ignorance, by living in reverential shame and self-expenditure as Yaso did, the relationship is destined to be inseparable. The pictograph *cheom* (忝) graphically helps us to picture the relationship we have attempted to describe: Heaven veils the human heart; a self-expending heart that sincerely cultivates Heaven.

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18) *EST*, a.13

19) *EST*, a.14.



## Appendix

### Glossary of Some Key Terms

#### \* *cheom* 忝

The adopted reading of the term is literally related to the pictograph itself, a compound of heaven (*cheon*) and heart (*sim*). The proposed meaning is reverential fear. In the context of *sudeok* it is synonymous with the Neo-Confucian notion of reverence (*gonggyeong* 恭敬). Religiously, it is synonymous with one's "infinite resignation" before God. Yi Byeok describes this qualified "God-relationship" as *cheom*, which one lives in dimly-perceived immanence (*munaejae*). In Yi Byeok's *EST*, this state in life was perfectly exemplified by Yaso's "personal discipline" of *sudeok*, i.e., *jeonghan*, the dying of self towards the Other.

#### \* *sudeok* 修德

The practice of self-cultivation (*susin*) through which one approaches and actualises *jen*, humanness (仁), and 'human nature' (*seong* 性). In being actualised, it turns one's individual existence into a person of sincerity (*seongin* 誠人), able to live towards the Other and face *Sangje*.

#### \* *jiphui* 緝熙

Yi Byeok's term for the Source or the 'Lord on High' (*Sangje*) who is Vastness. It can be described as a brilliance (*hwi* 熙) that weaves itself (*jip* 緝) into Creation and the (human) "ruined universe" by irradiating towards and withdrawing from them. In this light, *jiphui* can only be dimly-perceived in immanence (*munaejae*).

#### \* *munaejae* 應內在

*Munaejae*, a three-pictograph compound expression. The first one, *mu* (nihil, in philosophical Taoism's sense of the term) and *mok* (eye), give the pictograph the meaning, "to see briefly or dimly". The last two pictographs are *nae-jae* (immanence). Hence, 'dimly seen immanence', in the sense that Yi Byeok interpreted the Source, as *jiphui*, i.e. as divine Vastness that brilliantly weaves Itself into *Existenz* by both irradiating towards and withdrawing from phenomenal existence. In the *EST* it appears that one grasps *munaejae* as a sudden flash into Separateness (the soul is depicted as being thrown in the world and detached from its root, or *geunwon*), and self-expenditure (*jeonghan*).

\* jeonghan 情恨

*Han*, understood as *jeong-han*, is not a resentful dying *in the wake of* the Other, but a relentless dying *towards* the Other. Following Dr Cheon I Du's particular rendering of *jeonghan* as an essentially bright form of *han*, which has been historically apprehended through a self-expending *sensu amandi* by the Korean people, *jeonghan* would then evoke lightness, an affection-stirred hope which does not give itself to any form of reification. It reflects an active act of consolation (the temporal realm) and a passive acquiescence from and towards Separateness (the eternal, dimly-perceived dimension of immanence). In this sense, it is equivalent to absolute sincerity (*chiseong*). *Jeonghan* principally evokes and infuses a heartfelt "sense of reverence, a holy fear, a humility" before the Source, as it seeks to actualise *sudeok*. Admittedly, it is the *seongin*, the person of absolute sincerity, who becomes totally transfixed by *jeonghan*, as it appears paradigmatically through Yaso in the EST. He is able to live *sudeok* for what it should mean ultimately: the dying of self towards the Other.

The seonbi who strives to become a *seongin*, would actualise *sudeok* as his natural ethico-spiritual responsibility, inspired by a Heaven endowed human nature which must reflexively return to the Source, *geunwon* (根源).

*Jeonghan* constitutes a 'pathetic' notion (*jeong*) which temporally eludes rational or pathological conception. It is not simply "an unknown, mysterious reality", but a positive and passive "daily anxiety", eternal in a man. Contrariwise, it also encompasses the infinite passivity/patience of the Eternal towards Its creation and the creation's response: "infinite resignation" to a religiously cultivated return to Heaven. Hence, the individual existence reflexively enlightens, and thus transmutes, the dark understanding of *han* through an ethico-spiritual process of self-cultivation (*sudeok*) which he lives in "reverential shame" (*cheom*) and self-expenditure. *Jeonghan*, as personified by Yaso, informed Yi Byeok's 'pathetic' discourse on *sudeok*.

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