Special Issue

Korea Journal, vol. 65, no. 4 (Winter 2025): 106–132.
doi: 10.25024/kj.2025.65.4.106

Religion as an Epistemic Challenge: *The Confucian Response in Early 20th-Century Korea*

Seonhee KIM

Abstract

This article interrogates the question "Is Confucianism a religion?" by shifting attention from definitional debates to the epistemological dynamics that shaped the historical emergence of this question in early 20th-century East Asia. Rather than evaluating Confucianism's compatibility with standard definitions of religion, the study explores why such a framing was pursued in the first place. It argues that the encounter between Confucianism and the Western category of "religion" was not merely a matter of terminological translation, but a conceptual collision that gave rise to new epistemic categories and practical responses. By analyzing how Korean Confucian scholars—particularly Park Eun-sik, Yi Seung-hui, and Yi Byeong-heon—appropriated the concept of religion, the paper shows that the religionization of Confucianism functioned as a civilizational strategy amid national crisis. These thinkers did not adopt religion as a passive label, but as an active framework to rearticulate Confucian values, institutions, and missions within a modern register. However, their efforts also produced a categorical inversion, where Confucianism was subordinated under the very religious framework it sought to instrumentalize. Ultimately, this study demonstrates that the Confucian religion movement was not a misapplication of Western ideas, but an epistemological and practical response triggered by the encounter with the civilized Other. In doing so, it offers an interpretive account of Confucianism's refracted trajectory in modern society—a path forged by its historical encounter with the category of "religion."

Keywords: Confucianism, Confucian religious movement, jonggyo, Kang Youwei, Park Eun-sik, Yi Byeong-heon, Yi Seung-hui

---

Seonhee KIM is an associate professor in the Department of Philosophy, Ewha Womans University. E-mail: stillin@ewha.ac.kr.

Reframing the Question: Confucianism and Religion

The contours of Korea's Confucian religion movement during the early 20th-century—a pivotal epoch marking the advent of modernity—have been substantially delineated in previous scholarship.[1] Extensive research has scrutinized the movement's principal architects, their intellectual debt to Chinese Confucian reformers such as Kang Youwei, and the ideological substance and character of their religious enterprises.[2] These studies have predominantly interpreted the period's Confucian religion movement through the analytical framework of Confucian reform, positioning it within the broader constellation of patriotic enlightenment and national salvation movements. Such macro-analytical approaches provide compelling explanations of how Korean intellectuals, confronted with the loss of national sovereignty, came to champion Confucianism as a symbolic fulcrum for national mobilization, elucidating the movement's precipitating conditions, objectives, and methods.

However, from a more fine-grained perspective, further analytical differentiation is necessary, as there existed significant discrepancies in the ideologies that these figures pursued, the rivals they opposed, and the strategies they adopted. Beyond simply accounting for the differences in theoretical attempts and practical efforts to religionize Confucianism, it is more crucial to illuminate the underlying epistemological clashes and tensions that shaped these distinctions. Previous studies have often focused on those aspects of Confucianism that 20th-century scholars sought to utilize in a religious manner, rather than engaging in a reflexive examination of the very question of whether Confucianism qualifies as a *religion*. In this context, this study reorients the analytical focus toward the fundamental tension inherent

1. Korean-language scholarship on the Confucian religion movement among 20th-century Confucian scholars has significantly increased in both quantity and quality. Representative monographic studies include Keum (2003), Yu (1999), and Kim (2016). Although English-language scholarship on this topic is exceedingly rare, one may consult Eggert (2012) and Kaplan (2020).
2. For studies on the Confucian religion movement in modern China, see Ashiwa and Wank (2009), Wan (2022), and Dessein (2017).

in the conceptual encounter between Confucianism and *religion*, treating this intersection as the primary analytical problematic. From this vantage point, it seeks to reexamine the vectors and internal dynamics of Confucianism's reflexive transformation in early 20th-century Korea.

The purpose of this article is not to provide a historical narrative of the Confucian religion movement or evaluate its outcomes, but rather to reconsider critically the proposition of *religionizing* Confucianism in theoretical tension with the transplanted concept of *religion*. It seeks to problematize the process and logic by which the epistemic category of religion was superimposed onto Confucianism, investigating what challenges and tensions this new framework engendered for Confucian scholars under the conditions of the time. Focusing on how Western religious concepts reshaped Confucianism's status and role in the 20th century, this study reflectively traces its refracted and discontinuous trajectory from its earlier position as a premodern universal learning.

The Advent of *Religion* as an Event

The tension between the universality and historicity of the concept of religion renders any scholarly attempt to define or explain *religion* an inherently irresolvable challenge. William James's assertion—that "the very fact that they are so many and so different from one another is enough to prove that the word 'religion' cannot stand for any single principle or essence, but is rather a collective name" (James 1902, 26)—is virtually commonplace among scholars of religion. However, this understanding was not widely accepted as a general principle until at least the early 20th century, a period when the concept of religion was being introduced and disseminated throughout East Asia.

While practices encompassed by the broader semantic network of *religion* are found across cultures, it was the West that thematized—and sought to instrumentalize—the concept itself.

> The very attempt to define religion, to find some distinctive or possibly unique essence or set of qualities that distinguish the "religious" from the

> remainder of human life, is primarily a Western concern. The attempt is a natural consequence of the Western speculative, intellectualistic, and scientific disposition. It is also the product of the dominant Western religious mode, what is called the Judeo-Christian climate or, more accurately, the theistic inheritance from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The theistic form of belief in this tradition, even when downgraded culturally, is formative of the dichotomous Western view of religion. (King 2005)

In this way, the very concept of religion was thematized in accordance with Western interests, but such thematization also functioned as a strategic practice of labeling pursued for specific purposes. As is well known, the concept or category of religion was transmitted to and disseminated across East Asia in the context of the late 19th century transmission of European colonialism and capitalism (Ashiwa and Wank 2009, 6–7).

Building on the work of scholars such as Talal Asad (1993)—who argue that the concept of religion emerged through the political transformations of modern Europe—previous studies have claimed religion to be a modern concept that is seen most sharply in colonial interactions from the late 19th century (Ashiwa and Wank 2009, 2). From this perspective, the concept of religion may be seen not as a universal inheritance preserved by Europe through its long-standing Christian tradition, but rather as an invention of 19th-century Europe aligned with the ideological project of colonialism.

During this period, East Asia too came to experience this strategic invention as an event. In other words, while religion as a fundamental mode of human life can be found across all cultures and throughout most historical periods, in Asia, at least, *religion* arrived as an event at a specific historical moment.

It is widely recognized that the term *shūkyō* 宗教, though originally appearing in Chinese Buddhist texts, gained a form of conceptual citizenship in East Asia when it was adopted in Meiji-era Japan as the translation of the Western term "religion."[3] Subsequently, *shūkyō* was transmitted to China and

3. According to early studies, the term *shūkyō* was first officially employed in 1868 in the

Korea, eventually becoming a general concept shared across East Asia. While *shūkyō* initially referred specifically to Christianity during its early phase as a translation term in Japan, it gradually came to function as a universal concept encompassing other religions as well.[4]

However, the translation and dissemination of religion by Japanese intellectuals can hardly be seen as the result of a straightforward attempt to map East Asian traditions onto Western religions, particularly Christianity. This is due to a fundamental incongruity between the term religion and the Sino-Japanese compound *shūkyō*. The following passage clearly illustrates the conceptual disjunction between the modern notion of religion and its East Asian equivalents—*shūkyō* in Japanese, *jonggyo* in Korean, and *zongjiao* in Chinese.

> In traditional Chinese, the closest equivalent to the Western term religion is *jiao* 教, as seen in the cases of *rujiao* 儒教, *daojiao* 道教, and *fojiao* 佛教, or Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, respectively. *Jiao* in these cases is understood as the teachings or guiding doctrines of Confucius, Laozi, and Buddha. Although all three traditions can be seen as institutionalized systems embracing rituals, disciplines, and doctrines, the words *rujiao*, *daojiao*, and *fojiao* originally do not imply a sense of "system" or "institution" From an etymological point of view, these three terms in their original sense do not converge with the semantics of the Western terms of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism, respectively. It is in this sense that *jiao* 教, as well as *zong* 宗 and *dao* 道, is understood as belonging to traditional vocabulary and unable to engage in a crosscultural dialogue

context of translating diplomatic documents with the United States, and was again used in 1869 in diplomatic exchanges with the North German Confederation. It is estimated that the term began to be disseminated among Japanese intellectuals via journals and other media around 1877 (Meiji 10). For more details, see Aihara (1938, 2–5).

4. The emergence of *shūkyō* as a neologism for "religion" in modern Japan, along with its subsequent conceptual effects, has been the subject of extensive scholarly research across Japan, China, and Korea. For early Japanese scholarship on this topic, see Aihara (1938) and Isozaki (2002). For English-language scholarship, see Josephson (2012). On the formation and dissemination of the concept of religion in modern China, see Sun (2012).

> conditioned by both Eastern and Western paradigms. Although *jiao*, *zong*, and *dao* can still be used to refer to religious sects and doctrines when combined with other characters to form compound words, they do not coincide with what the Western concept of religion can denote and imply to modern minds. (Chen 2013, 14)

Although etymologically ancient, in 20th-century East Asia, religion operated not as a descriptive label but as an agenda that actively shaped new realities. The translated term *shūkyō* approximates not passive lexical adoption but the eventual emergence of new perspectives, methods, and practices. It introduced alterity into the familiar linguistic world, compelling intellectuals to experience unfamiliar ideas through their own semantic frameworks, often without fully recognizing that radically divergent ideologies were now competing within the seemingly singular lexical field of *jiao*.

However, the conflicts surrounding the essence and manifestations of *jiao* can hardly be considered adequately elucidated to date. Many studies continue to pose the question, "Is Confucianism a religion?" and then examine how closely Confucianism approximates the ideals, definitions, and characteristics of religion.[5] These very attempts to assess whether Confucianism can be subsumed within the category of religion demonstrate the challenges and refractions that Confucianism underwent during the modernization process. Endeavors to elucidate the religious dimensions of Confucianism risk becoming pursuits in heteronomous self-reflection—attempts to determine whether the essential characteristics of the other also exist within oneself.

At this juncture, it becomes possible to question the question itself: Why ask whether Confucianism is a religion? Why seek to identify religiosity within Confucianism?[6] The point is not merely to assess which characteristics

5. Yong Chen begins his monograph dealing with the debate about the religiosity of Confucianism with the following sentence. "The question of whether Confucianism is a religion is probably one of the most controversial issues in both Confucian scholarship and the discipline of religious studies" (Chen 2013, 1).
6. However, Confucianism was not initially regarded as a religion in the early stages of East-West contact. The very invention of the neologisms Confucius and Confucianism during the Jesuit mission to China exemplifies this historical context. As Lionel Jensen wrote, "The

of Confucianism do or do not conform to prevailing definitions of religion, but rather to interrogate the very rationale for approaching Confucianism through the lens of religion in the first place.

Marion Eggert, who examines the tensions provoked among Joseon intellectuals by the concept of religion, approaches the question of whether Confucianism can be considered a religion from the following perspective.[7]

> Consequently, the question about the emergence of precursors to the modern notion of religion needs to be asked as part of a larger question about the epistemic system that Confucianism provided, as well as its eventual changes and adjustments in the course of religious contact. It may be more generally the case that religious contact needs to be conceived of as, among other things, epistemic contact; it is especially true in the case of Confucianism, as the debate on whether Confucianism qualifies as religion is fueled exactly by its awarding a central position to "learning" rather than "belief." (Eggert 2012, 299–318)

However, such a line of inquiry demands a dual act of definition: it requires not only a critical clarification of what is meant by Confucianism but also a rigorous examination of the concept of religion itself. In this sense, the inquiry is doubly open-ended—and it is precisely this dual openness that renders the task so perplexing for scholars. One thing, however, is certain: in premodern

---

linguistic distinction accorded Confucianism is a vestige of the 17th-century European banishment of Daoism and Buddhism and its embrace of Confucianism. Of the three, only Confucianism has been integrated into Western self-consciousness to any degree" (Jensen 1998, 4). Julia Ching articulates her understanding of Confucianism in the following terms. "'Confucianism' is actually a misnomer for a tradition which is known in the country of its origin as the School of the Scholars, or Literati, that is, a broad, intellectual tradition based on the continuing interpretation of a body of writings known as the Classics. These revered writings include works of various genres: poetry, purported historical documents, divination oracles and accompanying interpretations, annals of a feudal state, and certain ritual texts" (Ching 1977, xv).

7. Her argument is convincing in pointing out that the conflict created by the translated term "religion" is not merely a question of how well the characteristics of Confucianism align with Western concepts of religion (i.e., a matter of examining similarities), but rather an epistemological issue arising from the very introduction of the concept of religion itself.

East Asia, Confucianism functioned not merely as a religion, a philosophy, or an ethical system in the modern Western sense, but rather as an all-encompassing form of universal learning—a worldview, an ideology, and a normative grammar of life. Yet as the modern definition of religion—rooted in 19th-century Western understandings informed by the monotheistic tradition of Christianity—was translated and disseminated across East Asia, it increasingly came to serve as a normative framework against which local traditions were measured, evaluated, and categorized.

As the unfamiliar concept embedded in the familiar neologism *jongjiao* 宗教 began to operate, traditions that had previously been grouped under the tripartite classification of *ru-fo-dao* 儒佛道—Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism—in the pre-contact East Asian context came to be reexamined in terms of their perceived similarities to Christianity. Among them, Buddhism and Daoism appeared more closely aligned with Western Christianity, due to their established traditions of ritual practices aimed at popular mobilization, priesthoods, sectarian organization, and temple systems—all elements commonly associated with religion in the Western sense. Although the premodern East Asian idea of the three teachings (三教)—with Confucianism at its center—did not originally correspond to the Western category of religion, the modern concept of religion, grounded in Christianity, came to occupy a position hierarchically above the three teachings by means of its semantic linkage with *jiao*. A categorical inversion and the consequent marginalization of Confucianism occurred between *jiao* and *religion*. *Jiao* now became subject to scrutiny and judgment based on only some of its internal traditions, and Confucianism was increasingly relegated within the broader category of religion. As a result, through the event of the conceptual importation of religion, East Asians began to perceive religion as a more foundational and superordinate category than the traditional three teachings or *rujiao*.

This categorical inversion and the reduction of Confucianism gave rise to at least two new modes of understanding and corresponding forms of practice: on the one hand, the idea that religion exists among all peoples—that is, that religion constitutes a universal human attribute—and on the other, the newly formed recognition that Christianity serves as the paradigmatic

example of that universal category. Consequently, two interconnected phenomena unfolded in early 20th-century East Asia: first, the embracing of religion as a transhistorical and universally operative category, and second, the development of a normative framework that encouraged the identification of Christianity-like elements within one's own tradition to find equivalents to the Christian model of religion.

Among the two interrelated epistemological events—the categorical inversion and the reduction of the notion of Confucianism—it was the latter that became more acutely recognized by East Asian intellectuals. While the former remained obscured by the optical illusion produced through translation, the latter was brought into sharp relief amid the national crisis induced by the mounting pressure of foreign powers. During this period, not only Chinese but also Korean Confucian scholars experienced these two epistemic shifts directly or indirectly and began to search for ways to confront them. Some Confucian thinkers in China and Korea sought to resolve the perceived reduction of Confucianism by aligning it with the category of religion. In other words, by religionizing Confucianism, they hoped to respond to the crisis of the state and to arrest the decline in Confucianism's societal authority and relevance.

The following section will examine the logic, justification, strategies, and methods employed by Korean Confucian scholars in the 20th century in their efforts to religionize Confucianism.

Reversing Categories: From Confucianism to Confucian Religion

The translated concept of religion provided a significant stimulus to Confucian scholars seeking to articulate a new agenda for the nation in times of crisis. As is well known, the figure who most actively and systematically developed this stimulus was Kang Youwei 康有爲 (1858–1927), one of the leading Confucian intellectuals of 20th-century China. Kang responded to the complex epistemological challenges posed by the introduction of the modern concept of religion by weaving them into his own reformist vision—aimed at overcoming the political and civilizational crisis confronting the Chinese state and people.

In other words, recognizing religion as a category hierarchically superior to individual intellectual traditions, and regarding Christianity as its normative model, Kang sought to identify within Confucianism elements that could be aligned with this modern standard. For him, the newly assigned identity of Confucianism as religion was not a wall that confined or diminished its scope, but rather a strategic agenda for reconstructing its cultural authority in a new era.

Kang Youwei posited a one-to-one correspondence between religion and the state. His central objective was to establish Confucianism as the national religion. Grounded in the belief that "when religion collapses, the state collapses with it" (Kang 1913), he proposed elevating Confucius to the status of religious founder and designating the Six Classics (六經) as sacred scriptures. He further advocated for the issuance of imperial edicts to establish Confucian churches, the official sanctioning of popular sacrificial rites to Confucius (Kang 1976b), and the transformation of existing academies (書院) and popular religious shrines into institutions dedicated to Confucian education (Kang 1976a).

During the same period as that of Kang Youwei, Korea faced a far more precarious national crisis. Unlike China, which had at least preserved its formal sovereignty, Korea was forced to confront the imperialist aggression of Japan. At this moment, Kang's attempt to transform Confucianism and establish it as a state religion in order to elevate his nation to the level of a modernized Western state strongly resonated with some Korean Confucian scholars. It was figures such as Park Eun-sik 朴殷植 (1859–1925), Yi Seung-hui 李承熙 (1847–1916), and Yi Byeong-heon 李炳憲 (1870–1940) who shouldered the task of elevating Confucianism to the ranks of modernity under the rubric of religion.

These intellectuals shared a common diagnosis of the crisis and chose similar trajectories in terms of goals and methods, as they all advocated for the religionization of Confucianism. Why did they seek to connect Confucianism with the unfamiliar category of *religion*? Why did they choose *religion* rather than politics, revolution, or warfare?

It is necessary first to examine what *religion* meant to these thinkers. Although *jonggyo* was invoked as a translation of the English term "religion,"

the distinctive meanings inherent in the source language were not transferred intact to the target language. This is because the target language itself derived from the receivers' own linguistic heritage.

An official use of the term *jonggyo* 宗教 during the Joseon period is found in Emperor Gojong's 高宗 (r. 1863–1907), "Royal Edict Honoring the Sage" (尊聖綸音). There Gojong stated, "Is not our nation's *jonggyo* the Way (道) of our Master Confucius?" This statement juxtaposes the concept of religion with the nation while positioning Confucianism as its corresponding counterpart. However, the term *jonggyo* as Gojong used it is difficult to regard as directly corresponding to the Western concept of *religion*. In a similar vein, for these thinkers, *religion* was closer to scholarship, morality, and ideology. It remained distant from meanings associated with transcendent or sacred beings, their veneration, and above all, the institutional apparatus of scriptures, priests, and churches established for such purposes. While they sought to reconstitute Confucianism within a new conceptual environment, the religion they envisioned did not directly correspond with Christianity, which served as the ideal type of religion at the time.

It was not, in fact, the power of the West that led to the acceptance of *jonggyo* as Confucianism's new designation. This is because it was actually Joseon intellectuals, not Westerners, who sought to examine and explain Confucianism through the concept, category, and practice of *jonggyo*. The following passage clarifies why intellectuals of this period readily embraced the unfamiliar notion of religion.

> What a person must never part from, not even for a moment, are the principles of filial piety (孝), fraternal duty (悌), loyalty (忠), and trustworthiness (信). These are precisely the teachings of Confucius and Mencius, and they have long been upheld for thousands of years as a religion in both China and Joseon. These teachings are like the vital energy (元氣) of human life, or like eating and drinking—essential elements that one cannot be separated from in daily life. Such a moral foundation is something shared by all nations; how much more, then, should it be so in our own country? Every nation in the world has its own religion, and each regards its respective teachings as the core of national life. (J. Yi 1907)

For Confucian scholars in early 20th-century Korea, religion referred to the traditional teachings that each nation had historically pursued, and in the case of China and Korea, this role had long been fulfilled by Confucianism. Above all, the essence of Confucianism as religion was understood to lie in the teachings of Confucius and Mencius—specifically, the virtues of filial piety, fraternal duty, loyalty, and trustworthiness.

Crucially, the concept of religion as it appears in this context does not correspond to what is today understood as institutional religion. It bears little relation to the notion of otherworldly salvation or to institutional structures characterized by scriptures and clerical hierarchies. Rather, it closely approximates the traditional notion of *gyo* 敎, meaning the guiding moral and civic ideology of the state and society.

In this sense, although these thinkers employed the modern neologism *jonggyo*, they fundamentally internalized it in a way that remained consistent with the semantic network of their own tradition. Their goal was to renew the foundational teachings of their heritage in order to recover the integrative force needed to rebuild the nation. Just as Christianity was credited with the advancement of Western civilization, they envisioned Confucianism—the sole and proper religion of China and Korea—as the moral force capable of advancing Eastern civilization.

Can the future of Confucianism truly be secured through the form of religion these thinkers proposed? At the very least, for Park Eun-sik, Yi Seung-hui, and Yi Byeong-heon—drawn to Kang Youwei's Confucian Church movement and who sought to establish a Korean branch of the Church of Confucius—religion appears to have represented both the aspiration of Confucianism and the imagined future of Joseon.[8]

8. The central agendas and distinctions among the four Korean intellectuals—Park Eun-sik, Yi Seung-hui, Yi Byeong-heon, and Song Ki-sik—who led the Confucian religion movement in Korea under the influence of Kang Youwei, are concisely articulated in the following passage. "Yet they did not accept Kang's ideas wholesale, and each carefully selected the particular agenda that best served his purposes. While Pak [Park Eun-sik] seems to have been mainly interested in Kang's political 'state-protecting Confucianism,' Yi Sŭng-hŭi [Yi Seung-hui] was reluctant to abandon his orthodox Zhu Xi studies and may have been essentially concerned with the legal, institutional backing Kang's movement could provide for his exiled Korean

While Christianity was undoubtedly the primary interlocutor that prompted these thinkers to reconstruct Confucianism, the qualities they sought to extract from religion, as represented by Christianity, did not stem from its theological depth or historical particularity. Rather, they were drawn to its universal function as a system of instruction—one that combined moral principles and intellectual order in guiding the people. Why, then, did these Confucian scholars call for a reinforcement of Confucian moral values and invoke the new category of religion in doing so?

Instrumentalizing Religion: Joseon Confucians and Civilizational Strategy

Park Eun-sik, one of the Korean Confucian scholars influenced by Kang Youwei's Confucian Church movement, was a leading figure of 20th-century Korea's enlightenment movement, as well as a journalist and independence activist. Like Kang Youwei, Park sought to subsume Confucianism within the category of religion in order to reform the tradition and mobilize it as a unifying force for the Korean nation. According to Park Eun-sik, religion is defined as follows.

> *Jonggyo* refers to the sage (聖人) establishing teachings on behalf of Heaven to enlighten all people. Since all things in heaven and earth emerge from one source, the hearts of those in the Eastern Sea and the Northern Sea are identical. Because the sage was the first to realize that all our hearts are the same, he extended this sameness to create religion…Therefore, the same principle exists in all people. (Park 2002)

This passage reveals that Park Eun-sik understood religion as largely

community in Manchuria. While Song Ki-sik supported Kang's Great Unity vision mainly in a perennial-religious, rather than a political, sense, Yi Pyŏng-hŏn [Yi Byeong-heon] seems to have adopted Kang's utopia in its totality, becoming Korea's leading Gongyang 公羊 scholar" (Kaplan 2020, 350–351).

synonymous with an ethical ideology intended to guide and enlighten the people. If religion was fundamentally understood as an ethical ideology, then the category of religion may not have been strictly necessary for Park Eun-sik. Even without invoking this term, Confucianism had already served as a normative moral framework within Joseon society. Why, then, did Park seek to position Confucianism within the category of religion? It was because what he ultimately hoped to emulate was not Confucianism per se, but rather the role that Christianity—regarded as a parallel tradition—had come to play in the development of European civilization.

Park Eun-sik believed that modern European nations had achieved strength and prosperity because Christianity was faithfully observed at all levels of society, from emperors to commoners (Park 2002). But then, why Confucianism for Joseon and not Christianity? For Park, religion was not a strategic tool to be individually chosen or adopted, but something intrinsically bound to a particular nation or people. He thus understood religion as a higher-order category that linked each nation to a specific tradition and integrated national identity with its corresponding religion.

Park Eun-sik's effort to religionize Confucianism stemmed from his desire to see Confucianism fulfill, in China and Korea, the same role that Christianity had played in the West. Yet from the outset, this vision contained a fundamental contradiction. If Confucianism had long existed as the indigenous religion of China and Korea, why had these countries, despite possessing it, failed to achieve the strength and prosperity that Western nations had attained through Christianity?

Park was fully aware of this paradox. He explicitly asked, "Why has Confucianism ultimately failed to flourish in the world like Buddhism or Christianity?" In response, he identified three major shortcomings of Confucianism. First, to reform Confucianism, it is necessary to alter its monarch-centered orientation and to propagate its spirit among the common people. Second, like Confucius, who traveled to save the world, Confucianism needed to be actively propagated. Third, the fragmented doctrines of Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucianism should be replaced by Yangming learning, which he regarded as more suitable for revitalizing the tradition (Park 1909).

Park Eun-sik sought to establish a one-to-one correspondence between

religion and the state, mapping the relationship between Christianity and the West onto that between Confucianism and Joseon. Within this framework, religion represented for him a strategic instrument—one that allowed for the selective intensification of Confucian resources without discarding them, in order to promote national development. In other words, the categorical reversal between Confucianism and religion offered Park a meaningful option to forestall the marginalization of Confucianism.

To this end, Park identified a new institutional center for selectively intensifying Confucianism as religion in the organization known as *Daedonggyo* 大同教 (Religion of Great Unity). With a preparatory meeting held in August 1909 and a founding assembly convened on September 11 of the same year, *Daedonggyo* sought to expand its influence through the establishment of regional branches and the founding of lecture halls to attract students. Ultimately, however, with the collapse of the Korean Empire in 1910, the organization was dissolved. Park Eun-sik's strategic effort to position religion atop Confucianism as a means of national salvation ultimately failed to prevent the diminution of Confucianism's scope and influence.

Yi Seung-hui can be cited as one of the Confucian scholars who sought to invert the categorical relationship between Confucianism and religion, placing Confucianism under the rubric of religion to derive a new source of national revitalization. Although Yi faithfully inherited his teacher and father Yi Jin-sang 李震相 (1818–1886), a prominent Neo-Confucian scholar, he ultimately witnessed the decline of Korea's sovereignty, leading to his exile in 1908 to Vladivostok, Russia, after which he settled in the Manchurian region.

Having met Kang Youwei on multiple occasions and having strongly agreed with his ideological foundation and vision for the religion of Confucius (孔教), Yi Seung-hui sought to establish a new branch of the Confucian Church—the "Korean Confucian Church of the Three Eastern Provinces" (東三省韓人孔教會)—in exile in Manchuria, in connection with the Chinese Confucian Church organization.

Yi Seung-hui proposed ten articles for the establishment of a Confucian Church, which included observing the Five Confucian Relationships, practicing frugality and restraint, formulating and adhering to organizational regulations, collecting funds to found schools and publish instructional

materials, and refraining from involvement in political or military affairs (S. Yi 1979, 264–265). Under the institutional framework of the Confucian Church, Yi sought to unite Korean exiles into a new moral community grounded not in religious faith, but in Confucian ethical consciousness. His aim was to construct a new form of Confucian community in exile—one organized around ethical discipline, communal regulations, and education, rather than belief.

In 1914, Yi Seung-hui authored a series of writings advocating the social dissemination of Confucianism—most urgently, the establishment of a Confucian educational system grounded in religious organization. His most representative works on Confucian education are "On the Curriculum of the Confucian Religion" (孔教教科論) and "On the Advancement of the Confucian Religion" (孔教進行論). In these writings, Yi discusses the construction of schools, the recruitment of students, the preparation of textbooks, and the formulation of educational regulations. He calls for the establishment of public Confucian schools centered on Confucian temples, the implementation of compulsory education, and a curriculum that emphasizes the Five Virtues and Five Relationships based on classical texts such as the *Rites of Zhou* (周禮) and *Book of Documents* (書經) (S. Yi 1927a).

Yi Seung-hui's first systematic articulation of the necessity of religion appeared in 1905, in a "Policy Memorial on Current Affairs" (擬陳時事疏) submitted to Emperor Gojong. In this document, the very first policy he proposed was "to reinforce human ethics by establishing religion" (明人倫以立宗教). He argued that "nothing is more urgent for Korea today than reinforcing the great principles of human ethics, and nothing is more important than establishing religion" (S. Yi 1927b).

The substantive goal underlying Yi Seung-hui's vision for the Confucian Church was the restoration of Confucian morality. If that is the case, then the method of establishing a Confucian Church by positioning Confucius as a religious founder may not fully align with the very aim he sought to realize. If the urgent task is the recovery of Confucian morality, and if those moral norms are already embedded within the Confucian tradition, then they are not values to be anticipated in the future, but rather principles that are already present—already *there* for those who seek them. For him, religion served as

an epistemological device for transformative re-cognition, allowing *what was there* to be innovated and newly understood as *what was needed*.

Yi Byeong-heon, born later than the two aforementioned figures, encountered Western institutions more vividly and directly under imperial Japanese rule. In his youth, he traveled to Seoul, where he experienced modern technologies such as the electric tram—an encounter that exposed him to the advanced material and infrastructural development of the West. This broader exposure was facilitated by the translation and publication activities of Protestant missionaries active in places like Shanghai; through them, Yi gained access to a more systematic range of Western knowledge than the previous generation.[9] His understanding extended beyond the category of religion to include other Western epistemological domains that challenged East Asia at the time, such as science and philosophy.

Yi Byeong-heon's theory of Confucian reform and his conception of Confucian Religion were profoundly influenced by Kang Youwei. He met Kang on five occasions, including a visit to Kang's residence in Hong Kong in 1914, during which they engaged in extensive discussions on the reform and "religionization" of Confucianism. Like Kang, Yi regarded religion as existing in a one-to-one correspondence with the nation-state.

He argued that without religion, a nation could not be preserved, and thus Confucianism must be established as the national religion with Confucius as its spiritual founder. Yi Byeong-heon saw the absence of religion as the root cause of national crisis. In response to critics who either opposed the religionization of Confucianism or blamed Confucianism itself for the collapse of the nation, Yi defended Confucianism, asserting that Korea fell not because of Confucianism, but because its principles were not properly realized.

> There are those who now say that Confucianism is incapable of serving the state. Alas, how lamentable! The fall of Korea and the weakening of China

9. Yi was able to acquire up-to-date Western knowledge and information through sources such as the *Wan'guo gongbao* (Review of the Times), published in Shanghai by the American missionary Young John Allen (1836–1907).

> occurred not because of Confucianism itself, but because its teachings were poorly practiced, and because we lacked the strategic flexibility (權道) to communicate and respond to changing conditions. They say the nation perished because of gyo, rather than considering how the nation might be saved through it—what sort of reasoning is this? (B. Yi 1989a, 623)

In proposing Confucianism as the ideological axis through which to guide the nation and its people—and thereby generate a new source of political and moral energy—Yi Byeong-heon employed a strategic orientation similar to that of Kang Youwei and Yi Seung-hui. However, Yi diverged from them in a significant respect. While Kang and Yi Seung-hui sought to subordinate Confucianism under the category of religion and to model its institutional form on Christianity by creating churches and schools, Yi did not invert the hierarchical relationship between Confucianism and religion. Instead, he positioned Confucianism above religion by placing religion, alongside philosophy and science, as one of several competing epistemic axes.

Yi's understanding of the relationship between Confucianism, religion, philosophy, and science is clearly articulated in his 1914 essay "On the Unity of Religion and Philosophy" (宗教哲學合一論) (B. Yi 1989b). There, he argues that whereas the West distinguishes between religion and philosophy, Confucianism integrates the two. To separate them, he claims, is to elevate philosophy as true knowledge while reducing religion to superstition. Detached from philosophy, religion becomes instrumentalized and is compelled to invoke concepts such as heaven and hell. Accordingly, Buddhism and Christianity—premised on heaven and hell—are, in Yi's view, otherworldly and misleading systems that succumb to the authority of divine power. In contrast, Confucianism recognizes no division between the secular and the transcendent and embodies a cosmological principle in which Heaven and humanity are united, thus precluding any separation between religion and philosophy (B. Yi 1989b, 545).

In this vein, Yi later argues in his 1921 treatise "Our Race Must Revere Confucianism" (吾族當奉儒教論) that Confucianism should not be viewed merely as a doctrine for China and Korea, but as the only true teaching capable of encompassing all world religions. This is because, in his view,

Confucianism, as the genuine teaching, alone possesses the conceptual breadth to embrace not only religion but also philosophy and science (B. Yi 1989c).

Yi Byeong-heon was clearly aware that religion competed with philosophy and science as a modern category, and he believed that Confucianism could encompass all of these domains. His optimistic view was not without basis: historically, Confucianism in East Asia had indeed served as a source not only of religious and philosophical guidance but also of scientific principles. While Yi shared with other Confucian scholars of his time a common recognition of Confucianism's historical mission and the need to actualize it through contemporary means, he diverged in one crucial respect—he sought to position *gyo* as a more comprehensive and superior category than religion, rather than subordinating Confucianism to the latter.

Marion Eggert explains the reasons Yi Byeong-heon sought to categorize Confucianism as "religion" rather than "philosophy"—both being new epistemological categories—as follows:

> After an overview of different philosophical and religious traditions, mainly gleaned from Japanese works, and a discussion of the terms "philosophy" (*chŏrhak* [*cheolhak*]) and "religion" (*chonggyo* [*jonggyo*]) that is rather sympathetic to the use of the latter for Confucianism, he still locates the superiority of Confucianism in its ability to bridge the distinctions between these categories, terming it the "Way." (Eggert 2012, 314)

Yi Byeong-heon sought to reinterpret the comprehensiveness of the Way as a marker of Confucian expansiveness and, within this framework, to highlight the functional aspects of Western religion—particularly institutions such as churches and schools—that facilitated mass mobilization and enlightenment. In doing so, he attempted to position Confucianism as a means for Korea's modernization.

In other words, while Yi Byeong-heon referred to Confucianism as a religion, he did not conceive of it as a discrete religion on par with Christianity. Rather, he positioned Confucianism above religion, philosophy, and science—seeking to embed within its ethical teachings and educational institutions for

the moral cultivation and enlightenment of the people. It may be said that he possessed a certain awareness of the epistemological distinctions and tensions among religion, philosophy, science, and Confucianism.

However, instead of engaging in a critical analysis of these categorical differences and their operative dynamics, Yi gravitated toward foundational ideological claims. He sought to elevate Confucianism as a comprehensive framework—an overarching umbrella under which all such domains could be integrated.

The challenge was that the Way, as a universal principle encompassing all domains of human activity, proved too broad or too vague to be flexibly integrated into the differentiated epistemic categories of Western modernity, which had developed precisely through a process of compartmentalization—philosophy, religion, science—each operating autonomously and excluding mutual interference as much as possible.

Consequently, the newly introduced epistemic and institutional categories—such as philosophy, religion, and science—threatened to undermine the integrative authority of Confucianism as a form of universal learning. While Confucianism did include elements corresponding to Western philosophy, such as metaphysical speculation, as well as features of religion, such as ancestral rites, and even scientific disciplines like astronomy and mathematics, these had functioned within an internally unified Confucian framework. Once the new Western paradigms, mediated through Japan, came to be seen as epistemologically and institutionally prior to Confucianism, Confucianism no longer aligned with any single domain, and thus risked being dismissed as an empty and ineffective form of abstract knowledge.

As we have seen so far, what these Confucian scholars expected was not an innovation within Confucianism itself, but an innovation in the epistemological category through which Confucianism could be newly situated. Therefore, during this period, Confucianism did not change in its essence, message, or expected effects, but rather acquired a new frame—religion— which was adopted as an instrumental category. For these Confucian scholars who sought to transform Confucianism into a *religion*—an imported yet familiar term—it served as propaganda, aligning with the imagination and expectations of *civilization* as the ideal orientation to

overcome the crisis facing Korea.

When innovation was needed, instead of comprehensively reforming or abandoning Confucianism, they introduced a new epistemological category that encompassed it. They believed this new overarching category could provide the change and innovation that Korea needed by transforming Confucianism into a *movement*. They saw the possibility of Confucianism as a movement in the gap that emerged between the imported word *religion* and its translation—the traditional term *jonggyo.* However, they failed to see that *religion*, introduced as an instrumental frame, could act as a Procrustean bed that would cut away the traditional and complex aspects of Confucianism. The fact that an already-formed hierarchy could block or restrict Confucianism's transition into modern society was an outcome beyond their strategy and expectations.

Beyond Epistemic Mismatch: Towards a New Status for Confucianism

The proponents of the Confucian religion movement sought to expand or transform the domain of traditional Confucianism, which had integrated introspective practices of self-cultivation (修養), intellectual systems grounded in classical scholarship (經學), and the political ideology of ritual governance (禮治). In order to conform to the format of religion modeled after Christianity, they endeavored to convert traditional spaces—such as the private study where self-cultivation and intellectual inquiry took place, the academy (書院) where disciples learned from masters and engaged in scholarly discourse with peers, and the ancestral shrine (祠堂) where rituals were performed—into churches for convening congregations and schools for educational purposes. In other words, they sought to preserve the status of Confucianism by transferring its material foundations into the institutional framework of religion.

However, Confucian scholars largely retained their traditional lexicon while merely reframing it within the newly introduced epistemological category of religion. In terms of substance, they continued to promote core Confucian ethical values—such as *ren, yi, li*, and *zhi*—preserving the

foundational principles and aspirations of the tradition. Yet in terms of rationale and framing, they invoked the concept of religion to assert the contemporary relevance and legitimacy of their project.

In this regard, *religion* was simultaneously an external imposition and an internal appropriation. The very term *gyo*, adopted as the translation for religion, had long served as a comprehensive concept encompassing the ideological and intellectual traditions of East Asia, including Confucianism. These scholars were, in effect, projecting a foreign conceptual category onto their own cultural and intellectual heritage—reinscribing the Other within their own discursive framework.

Ultimately, the difficulty of relocating Confucianism into the category of religion stemmed from the fact that the adopted concept of religion risked diminishing Confucianism's traditional status and role. Although these thinkers invoked *gyo*—a familiar term in East Asia—as a shared point of mediation, and projected onto Confucianism the functions Christianity fulfilled in the West, they remained insufficiently attentive to the epistemic inversion that occurred in the process: the elevation of *religion* over *gyo* and the resulting reduction of Confucianism to a subordinate position.

In fact, when Confucian scholars in the late Joseon period proposed religion as a means to save the nation, the concept of *jonggyo*, did not so much conflict with the original term as it constituted a newly constructed epistemological framework stimulated by the encounter with the Western concept. The real issue arises when examining the intellectual, ideological, and political practices surrounding Confucianism during this period: we must recognize that an epistemic incongruity with religion emerges from within our own interpretive framework.

In other words, the concept of religion that ascended alongside European colonial expansion into East Asia—and was disseminated through missionary, legal, and institutional means—is fundamentally different from the conception of religion found in contemporary religious studies, which is more attuned to non-Christian traditions. Likewise, the version of religion introduced into Korea via late 19th century Japan differs from the Christianity-centered notion of religion promoted in Protestant missionary literature circulated in Shanghai, where Christianity was depicted as both the standard and ideal

of civilization. A failure to account for these discrepancies makes it difficult to fully understand the selective appropriations and strategic emphases of intellectuals during this transformative period.

It is also important not to overlook the fact that, in early 20th-century Korea, the concept of religion was understood quite differently by its transmitters and its recipients. For Protestant missionaries, who criticized China's backwardness and feudalism while presenting Christianity as the ideal of civilization, religion inherently entailed both the essential element of institutionalized worship of a transcendent God and its external forms, such as churches and educational institutions. However, for Confucian scholars, who examined and selectively received these transmissions, attention was directed primarily to these external forms. This selective reception was due in part to the incompatibility of the essential tenets of Christianity with the cultural and intellectual framework of Confucianism, but more fundamentally because these scholars were not interested in inner faith per se—they were seeking civilizational tools and methods for national and ethnic revitalization.

Put another way, for them, religion was not an end in itself, but a means. And what they ultimately sought through that means was not merely the preservation of the state, but the attainment of civilization, a more abstract and universal condition. The Confucian scholars of this period did not aim simply at Westernization or modernization; rather, they pursued civilization as a condition that would enable national self-strengthening and autonomy. In doing so, they appropriated both ethical and scientific dimensions, as well as practical institutions such as worship and social associations. The Confucian religion movements of early 20th-century Korea, therefore, should not be viewed as distorted appropriations or misapplications of Western imports, but rather as indigenous developments—new forms of consciousness and practice catalyzed by engagement with a shared signifier.

From the Western perspective, what was sent to East Asia was an envelope labeled "religion," enclosing the seed of Christianity. But East Asians, having received only the envelope, did not plant the seed inside. However, from the perspective of Korean Confucian scholars, the term *jonggyo* inscribed on the envelope was not a direct translation of the English religion or Latin *religio*—it was a compound of two native concepts, *jong* 宗 (lineage or tradition) and *gyo*

敎 (teaching or doctrine), with *gyo* in particular representing the very essence and normative ideal of Confucianism, something they already possessed and needed no instruction in. In this sense, they were not merely passive recipients. Regardless of what the senders of religion intended to convey, Korean thinkers actively rearticulated and reimagined the content of *gyo* in line with their own traditions and intellectual priorities.

This is precisely why their efforts should not be assessed simply as a measure of how well they understood the modern Western concept of religion—as defined or highlighted by European intellectuals in the colonial period. The Confucian religion movement of early 20th-century Korea was not a mistranslation or a distortion of a Western import. Rather, it was the generative development of new modes of thought and practice provoked by the encounter with a shared signifier. Although Korean Confucians, too, inscribed the label "religion" on the surface, what they were invoking was not faith but ethical self-cultivation; what they aimed to revive was not a philosophical theism, but national advancement.

In the end, what the letter came to contain was not the message of the sender, but the ingredients of civilization—the means by which a fallen Korea could reconstitute itself through civilizational renewal. The movement to religionize Confucianism was thus not merely an effort toward national reconstruction, but a reflection of the aspiration for—and the limitations of—a civilizational transformation.

REFERENCES

Aihara, Ichirōsuke. 1938. "Yakugo 'shūkyō' no seiritsu" 訳語「宗教」の成立 (The Formation of the Term 'Religion'). *Nihon shūkyō gakkai dai 5 kai taikai kiyō* (Proceedings of the 5th Annual Conference of the Japanese Association for Religious Studies) 103: 1–6.

Asad, Talal. 1993. *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Ashiwa, Yoshiko, and David L. Wank. 2009. "Making Religion, Making the State in Modern China: An Introductory Essay." In *Making Religion, Making the State*, edited by Yoshiko Ashiwa and David L. Wank, 1–19. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Chen, Yong. 2012. *Confucianism as Religion: Controversies and Consequences*. Leiden: Brill.

Ching, Julia. 1977. *Confucianism and Christianity*. Tokyo: Kodansha International.

Dessein, Bart. 2017. "Religion and the Nation: Confucian and New Confucian Religious Nationalism." In *Religion and Nationalism in Chinese Societies*, edited by Cheng-tian Kuo, 199–232. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Eggert, Marion. 2012. "'Western Learning', Religious Plurality, and the Epistemic Place of 'Religion' in Early-Modern Korea (18th to Early 20th-Centuries)." *Religion* 42.2: 299–318.

James, William. 1902. *The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Co.

Jensen, Lionel M. 1998. *Manufacturing Confucianism: Chinese Traditions and Universal Civilization*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Josephson, Jason Ānanda. 2012. *The Invention of Religion in Japan*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Junichi, Isomae. 2002. "Kindai ni okeru 'shūkyō' gainen no keisei katei" (The Formation of the Concept of 'Religion' in the Modern Period). In vol. 1 of *Kindai chi no seiritsu, 1870–1910 nendai* (Formation of Modern Knowledge, 1870s–1910s), edited by Komori Yoichi, et al., 172–175. Tokyo: Iwanami shoten.

Kang, Youwei. 1913. "Kongjiaohui xu (1)" 孔教會敍(一) (Preface to Confucian Society [1]). *Kongjiaohui zazhi* 孔教會雜誌 (Journal of Confucian Society) 1.2 (March): 1–4.

Kang, Youwei. 1976a. "Wuxu zougao: Qing zun Kongsheng wei guojiao li jiaobuhui yi Kongzi jinian er fei yinsi zhe" (Memorials of 1898: Requesting Honor Confucius as National Religion, Establish Religious Departments and Associations, Use the

Confucian Calendar, and Abolish Heterodox Shrines). In vol. 12 of *Kang Nanhai xiansheng yizhu huikan* (Collected Posthumous Works of Master Kang). Taipei: Hongye Book Company.

Kang, Youwei. 1976b. "Bulu daicao zouyi: Qing chi ge sheng gai shuyuan yinci wei xuetang zhe" (Supplementary Record of Draft Memorials: Requesting to Order the Provinces to Convert Academies and Heterodox Shrines into Schools). In vol. 12 of *Kang Nanhai xiansheng yizhu huikan* (Collected Posthumous Works of Master Kang). Taipei: Hongye Book Company.

Kaplan, Uri. 2020. "Protestant Confucianism: Kang Youwei's Influence in Korea." *Numen* 67.4: 347–372.

Keum, Jang-tae. 2003. *Yugyo gaehyeok sasang-gwa Yi Byeongheon* (Confucian Reform Thought and Yi Byeong-heon). Seoul: Yemun seowon.

Kim, Sun-seok. 2016. *Geundae yugyo gaehyeollon-gwa yugyo-ui jeongcheseong* (Modern Confucian Reform Theories and Confucian Identity). Paju: Mosineun saram-deul.

King, Winston L. 2005. "Religion (1987)." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed., edited by Lindsay Jones, 7962. Detroit, MI: Macmillan Reference USA.

Park, Eun-sik. 1909. "Yugyo gusillon" (On the Reform of Confucianism). *Seobuk hakhoe wolbo* (Northwest Learning Society Monthly Bulletin) 1.10: 1–7.

Park, Eun-sik. 2002. "Jonggyoseol" (On Religion). In vol. 3 of *Baekam Bak Eunsik jeonjip* (Collected Works of Baekam Park Eun-sik). Seoul: Dongbang Media.

Platvoet, Jan G., and Arie L. Molendijk, eds. 1999. *The Pragmatics of Defining* Religion: Contexts, Concepts, and Contests. Leiden: Brill.

Smith, Wilfred Cantwell. 1963. *The Meaning and End of Religion: A New Approach to the Religious Traditions of Mankind*. New York: MacMillan.

Sun, Jiang. 2012. *Kindai chūgoku no shūkyō, kessha to kenryoku* (Religion, Associations, and Power in Modern China). Tokyo: Kyūko shoin.

Wan, Zhaoyuan. 2022. *Science and the Confucian Religion of Kang Youwei (1858–1927): China Before the Conflict Thesis*. Leiden: Brill.

Yi Byeong-heon. 1989a. "Junghwa yugi" (Record of Travels in China) In vol. 1 of *Yi Byeongheon jeonjip* (Collected Works of Yi Byeong-heon). Seoul: Asea munhwasa.

Yi, Byeong-heon. 1989b. "Jonggyo cheolhak hapillon" (On the Unity of Religion and Philosophy). In vol. 1 of *Yi Byeongheon jeonjip* (Collected Works of Yi Byeong-heon). Seoul: Asea munhwasa.

Yi, Byeong-heon. 1989c. "Ojok dang bong yugyoron" (Our Race Must Revere Confucianism). In vol. 1 of *Yi Byeongheon jeonjip* (Collected Works of Yi Byeong-heon). Seoul: Asea munhwasa.

Yi, Jong-jun. 1907. "Jonggyo-reul bulgabeul sungbong-io singu-reul bulgabeul chamjak ira na jajiji-ui birmyeong-e banbi banggwan-ui cheompao" (Religion Must Inevitably Be Revered, and Both the Old and the New Must Be Considered, Yet in Lacking Clarity about Ourselves, We End Up Being Exposed by Onlookers). *Daehan jaganghoe wolbo* (Monthly Bulletin of the Daehan Self-Strengthening Society) 9 (March 25): 13–16.

Yi Seung-hui. 1927a. "Gonggyo jinhaengnon" (On the Advancement of the Confucian Religion). In vol. 29 of *Daegyejip* (Collected Writings of Yi Seung-hui).

Yi, Seung-hui. 1927b. "Uijin sisa so" (Memorial on Current Affairs). In vol. 4 of *Daegyejip* (Collected Writings of Yi Seung-hui).

Yi, Seung-hui. 1979. "Dong samseong hanin gonggyohoe chwijiseo" (Mission Statement of the Confucian Church of Koreans in the Three Eastern Provinces of Manchuria). In vol. 6 of *Hangye yugo* (Posthumous Manuscripts of Yi Seung-hui), 264–265. Gwacheon: Guksa pyeonchan wiwonhoe (National Institute of Korean History).

Yu, Jun-gi. 1999. *Hanguk geundae yugyo gaehyeok undongsa* (A History of Modern Korean Confucian Reform Movements). Revised ed. Seoul: Asea munhwasa.

Received: 2025.05.26. Revised: 2025.10.12. Accepted: 2025.10.12.