

Discursive Structures and Cultural Features of Nak-ron Thought in Late Joseon Korea*

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Abstract

In the eighteenth century, classic revivalism (bokgojuui 復古主義) emerged as a scholarly method for East Asian intellectuals in search of a new self-identity after the dynastic shift from Ming to Qing. Amidst this trend of the East Asian intellectual world, the Horak debate that arose among Joseon scholars was a peculiar phenomenon. Its basis was on the Noron's political and scholarly positions founded upon Zhu Xi Confucianism (Jujahak 朱子學), which was incompatible with classic revivalism. Noron labeled classic revivalism negatively as classic imitationalism (uigojuui 擬古主義), and, in that context, the Nak-ron group of the Noron emphasized presentness and universality by arguing the equalness of past and present, the mind-hearts of sages and commoners, and natures of humans and animals. However, the Horak debate and the ideas that it represented began to decline in the nineteenth century in various ways, caused by, for example, Nak-ron's overemphasis on presentness, its assimilation into Ho-ron, and the emergence of classic revivalism in Joseon Korea.

Keywords: Ho-ron, Nak-ron, *cheongi*, Tang-Song Ancient Literature, true-view landscape paintings, classic revivalism, presentness, universality, Horak debate

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Introduction

The Horak debate is a very important series of debates based on Confucian ideas over the issues of the mind-heart and nature. This controversy emerged in the early eighteenth century among Noron scholars in the Chungcheong area and eventually spread to scholars in Seoul and the Gyeonggi area. The discussed issues ranged from philosophical topics to the diverse areas of politics, society, and governance. A number of modern scholars have developed our understanding of the philosophical and historical significance of the Horak debate, showing that the debate over the mind-heart and nature arose in accord with the changing historical environment and had an important impact on Joseon Korean politics and society.¹ Nonetheless, there remains more work to be done to further develop our knowledge on other aspects of the Horak debate so as to achieve a total and comprehensive understanding of it.

This paper studies the Horak debate to identify the ideological characteristics and discursive structures of Nak-ron, one of the two Neo-Confucian groups of Noron along with its contender in the debate, the Ho-ron group. Previous research on Nak-ron has centered on the similarities and differences between human and non-human natures and the mind-hearts of sages and commoners. The main purpose of this study is to understand the Nak-ron's Neo-Confucianism in the context of the different intellectual systems of East Asia and to review its emergence, development, and dissolution. Results of such attempts will clarify the discursive foundation of Nak-ron, which comprised the core of the Joseon intellectual world in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

1. For previous studies of the Horak debate, refer to Choi et al. (2003) and Cho (2006).

Classic Revivalism in the East Asian Intellectual World after the Dynastic Shift from Ming to Qing

The overthrow of the Ming dynasty and the following establishment of the Qing dynasty by the Jurchen in the seventeenth century caused chaos among intellectuals in Korea, Japan, and Vietnam as well as China. It was a particularly powerful political and cultural shock to Joseon Korean scholars, who viewed the overthrow as disastrous. From then on, many significant changes occurred in the East Asian intellectual world. After the decline of the Ming dynasty, which had been regarded as the embodiment of the “Central Civilization” (*junghwa* 中華), Korea, Japan, and Vietnam respectively tried to succeed the Central Civilization. The concept of the Central Civilization as an empire ruled by the Han Chinese people could no longer be valid after the birth of the non-Chinese Qing dynasty. Thereafter, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese intellectuals developed their own concepts of Central Civilization and, in their respective ways, consequently arrived at the new idea: “We are the Central Civilization.”

In Joseon Korea, the notion of Joseon as the Central Civilization, as advocated by members of Noron such as Song Si-yeol (1607-1689), pervaded society. Likewise, the idea that Japan was the center of world civilization arose in Japan in the seventeenth century. For example, Yamaga Soko (1622-1685) considered his country to be the center of the world and labeled Japan as the central dynasty and China a peripheral dynasty.² As for the Vietnamese, they had previously regarded themselves as the people of the southern state relative to the northern state of China (Furuta 2008, 23). However, after the fall of the Ming, Vietnamese intellectuals held that the Qing dynasty could not be the legitimate successor of the Central Civilization because it was founded not by the Chinese but by Manchurians and that it was time for Vietnam to be the center of world culture (Yu

2. “或疑 本朝稱中國者 直以稱美之乎 又有其所以之名歟 . . . 蓋地在天之中 而中國又得其中 是乃中之又中也 土得天地之中 則人物必精秀 而事義又無過不及之差 本朝太祖 天御中主尊 國常立尊 其尊號名義 既有常中之言 以建國中之柱 故所以其為中國 乃天然之勢也” (Yamaga 1913, 404).

1996, 79). In sum, the self-centered concept of the Central Civilization dissolved in China with the dynastic shift from Ming to Qing and was passed onto each of its neighboring countries. In the case of Qing China, Han Chinese intellectuals took the lead in advancing the tradition of the Philologico-Bibliographical Study (Gojeunghak 考證學) and sought the archetypes of the Chinese Central Civilization as they understood them.³

It is interesting to note the fact that classic revivalism (*bokgojuui* 復古主義) played a significant role as the basis of each country's efforts to become the true Central Civilization. The cases of China and Japan are the most typical examples of the prevalence of classic revivalism, as demonstrated in Qing China's Philologico-Bibliographical Study and Tokugawa Japan's Ancient Studies (Kogaku 古学) and National Studies (Kokugaku 国学). Such classic revivalism can be traced back to the School of Qin-Han Ancient Literature (Jinhan Gomunpa 秦漢古文派), to which intellectuals such as Li Panlong (1514-1570) and Wang Shizhen (1526-1590) belonged. This school of thought was very popular in Ming China and was introduced into Korea and Japan later in the seventeenth century. The school sought exemplary models of prose in the Qin and Han period and of poetry in the prime of the Tang dynasty.⁴ Unlike Neo-Confucian scholars, such followers of Qin and Han archaic prose advanced their own literary tenets that a writer ought to compose prose following models of the writings of high antiquity. This approach certainly enjoyed a wide influence in the East Asian intellectual world. For example, the Japanese scholar Ogyu Sorai (1666-1728) once stated that he realized the presence of some fundamental weaknesses in Jujahak 朱子學 (Zhu Xi Confucianism) and developed the ideas of Kobunjigaku 古文辭学 (Japanese literary movement which tried to find a literary model from Qin-Han peri-

3. The Philologico-Bibliographical Study of China involves the restoration of the Chinese Central Civilization. Refer to Elman (2004, 89-103) and Chow (1994, 69-70; 184-186).

4. For the Former and Latter Seven Masters (*qianhou qizi* 前後七子) of the School of Qin-Han Ancient Literature of the Ming dynasty, refer to Zhou (1992, 214-230).

od prose and poetry in the prime of the Tang dynasty) by reading the works of Wang Shizhen and Li Panlong.⁵

This scholarly trend focusing on ancient studies was more fully developed as a major methodology in Tokugawa Japan (Inoue 1915). This form of classic revivalism produced many prominent achievements in the Japanese intellectual world. Ogyu Sorai proposed the Way of ancient kings and sages as a new moral criterion to replace the Neo-Confucian *li* (Maruyama 1995, 180-259). Later, Motoori Norinaga (1730-1801), a leading scholar of National Studies, brought into focus ancient Japanese sages instead of Chinese ones and advocated the universality of the concept of the Way. Norinaga developed the divine way of nature (*shijenno shinto* 自然之神道) and accepted the Six Classics (*yukgyeong* 六經) of ancient China only as supplements to it.⁶ Though Norinaga set Japan in the center of the universe unlike Sorai, both intellectuals similarly emphasized the Way of high antiquity that took a different stance from the philosophy of Zhu Xi Confucianism (Koyasu 2006, 156-158).

The Philologico-Bibliographical Study, developed as a form of classic revivalism to verify the authenticity of classical texts, became popular in Qing China. Any form of classic revivalism at that time referred directly to the original classics rather than relying on the Zhu Xi Confucian editions of them. This scholarly trend also appeared in Vietnam and Korea to some extent. The influence of Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming was weak in Vietnam. Vietnamese Confucianism lacked the medieval discourse of universality and was rather more

5. Ogyu Sorai was influenced by Wang Shizhen and Li Panlong, members of the Former and Latter Seven Masters in the Ming dynasty, to eventually discard Song Learning (Songhak 宋學) and establish Kobunji. He said in *Bendo* 弁道 (Distinguishing the Way) that “he finally was enlightened to see Kobunji after he had come to read the writings of Wang and Li thanks to the Heaven’s grace” (Bito 1974, 101; Wang 1988, 230).

6. “上古之時 君與民皆奉自然之神道而依之 身不修而修 天下不治而治矣 禮義自有焉存矣 又奚須聖人之道焉 其至中世 風俗漸變 人多詐偽 姦臣賊子 亂國滑倫 於是乎假異國聖人之道而治之理之 又勢之不得已也不佞雖不草 幸生此神州 賴大日靈貴之寵靈 奉自然之神道 而依之 則禮義智仁 不蘄而有焉 夫人之為萬物靈乎 以聖人之道也哉 夫人之為萬物靈 以賴天神地祇之寵靈而已 不佞之讀 六經論語 唯玩其文辭而已矣 而六經論語是聖賢之所言語 或有可以補自然之神道者 則亦取之耳” (Motoori 1985, 21).

influenced by ancient Confucianism.⁷ In the case of Joseon Korea, the scholarly tendency of ancient studies to stress the importance of the Six Classics found its roots in the Namin scholar Heo Mok (1595-1682), who was influenced by the School of Qin-Han Ancient Literature in the seventeenth century. This tendency was developed as the scholarly characteristic of the Namin scholars of Gyeonggi-do province (Geungi Namin 近畿南人) and was succeeded by Namin and Soron scholars.⁸ These efforts to construct a new self-identity after the dynastic shift from Ming to Qing appeared mostly in the form of classic revivalism. Those who maintained such views seem to have believed that the Central Civilization was polluted by the barbarian Qing dynasty and, therefore, they ought to turn to the original and pure sources of the Central Civilization. In fact, many reform proposals were put forth as part of the search for the authentic and original forms of the Central Civilization.

Notably, Noron scholars engaged in the Horak debate took a different position than that of classic revivalists in terms of their discussions on the new self-identity. Since they had based their individual and collective identities on being the successors of Zhu Xi Confucianism, it would not have been easy for them to accept any form of classic revivalism that turned away from the Neo-Confucian tradition and towards the period of high antiquity. In short, the emergence of classic revivalism was a threat to the philosophical foundation of Noron, whose system of thought presupposed the idealization of Zhu Xi Confucianism.

There is, then, some reason in Noron scholars' criticism of the School of Qin-Han Ancient Literature and their defense of the classics of the Tang and Song dynasties. As Zhu Xi Confucian scholars saw it, many dangerous elements of "heterodox" philosophy in the archaic literature of the Qin and Han dynasties could potentially disrupt the

7. The metaphysical discussion on medieval universality in which Zhu Xi's and Wang Yangming's Confucianism took interest was unusual in Vietnamese Confucianism. Refer to Woodside (2002, 141-143).

8. For Heo Mok's studies on the Six Classics, refer to Jung (1991), Kim (1987), and Han (1989).

Zhu Xi Confucian world view (Cho 2003). Because of this, Zhu Xi Confucian intellectuals felt the need to create their own literary world embodying their philosophical ideals. This tendency was a cultural orientation uncommon in the East Asian intellectual world after the shift to the Qing dynasty. Nevertheless, such an orientation was reasonable for those who tried to defend the tradition of Zhu Xi Confuciansim. The suppression of classic revivalism can be seen as a prominent feature of the Joseon intellectual world, especially the Nak-ron intellectual world.

Nak-ron's Discourse on Presentness and Universality in the Early Eighteenth Century

The Noron's cultural discourse, especially the fact that Nak-ron's Neo-Confucian perspective and literary characteristics led to the creation of new artistic trends as the Theory of the Profound Workings of Heaven (*cheongi ron* 天機論) and true-view landscape paintings (*jingyeong san-suhwa* 眞景山水畫), illustrates that the Noron's mode of thinking was not founded on classic revivalism. While classic revivalism sought models in and before the Han dynasty, Zhu Xi Confucianism looked to the relatively more recent Song period. Although Zhu Xi Confucian scholars, like other scholars of Confucianism, viewed the Three Dynasties of high antiquity (Xia, Shang, and Zhou) as the ideologically ideal model, their emphasis was not on the dynasties per se but Zhu Xi's interpretation of them. This is the aspect in contrast to classic revivalism and reflecting the presentness of Zhu Xi Confucianism. The Nak-ron's scholarly attitude that stressed *jadeuk* 自得 (understanding the essentials and natures of things immediately from the situations one faces at the moment without relying on the authority of the norms established in the past) as the main method of learning was more present-oriented than any other Neo-Confucian schools in the sense that it sought to solve problems in and of themselves rather than relying upon past standards. This emphasis on presentness was the theoretical basis of Nak-ron's doctrine and cultural discourse.

This issue of presentness relates to the position of Nak-ron in the Horak debate. Nak-ron scholars were critical of Yi I's (1536-1584) *li-qi* theory (*igi ron* 理氣論) in that it rendered *li* powerless by overemphasizing the regulatory function of *qi* and underlined the substantiality and controlling power of *li* within things.⁹ Accordingly, they argued that human beings and non-human beings had the same nature (*inmulseong dong ron* 人物性同論) and that sages and commoners had the same mind-heart (*seongbeomsim dong ron* 聖凡心同論). Their belief in the substantiality of *li* strengthened their desire to manifest *li* in reality.¹⁰ In Nak-ron's system of thought, *li* existed in the present and in everything universally, and its scholarly discourse accordingly advocated the presentness and universality of *li* in an attempt to actualize it in the present.

In this respect, it can be said that Nak-ron scholars incorporated some elements of Wang Yangming Confucianism into their Zhu Xi Confucian tradition. In fact, Wang Yangming Confucianism (*Yangmyeonghak* 陽明學) was a school of Confucian thought mostly focused on presentness and universality in that it highlighted the monism of *li* and *qi*, oneness of the mind-heart and nature, and oneness of the internal and the external. Its notion that one's own mind-heart is the ideal model of humanness per se led to the criticism of the function of *li* as an external criterion. Similar ideas are present in the discourse of Nak-ron scholars. For instance, Kim Chang-hyeop (1651-1708), one of the leaders of Nak-ron, fiercely rejected Wang Yang-

9. “若槩以理無所作爲 而遂以心之善惡 只屬乎氣之清濁 則是理無所與於善惡 而所謂理者直是一箇傀儡物事 有亦可無亦可 烏足爲萬物萬事之樞紐主宰 而無極之真 至虛而至實 本然之妙 無適而不然者 將於何處而可見乎 栗翁於此 自欠一段語意 而其失不待辨說而可知矣”; “栗谷人心道心說 善者清氣之發 惡者濁氣之發 曾見趙成卿疑之 而彼時乍聞未契 不復深論矣 後來思之 栗谷說誠少曲折 蓋氣之清者 其發固無不善 而謂善情皆發於清氣則不可 情之惡者 固發於濁氣而謂濁氣之發 其情皆惡則不可”; “理雖曰無情意無造作 然其必然能然當然自然 有如陳北溪之說 則亦未嘗漫無主宰也 是以人心之動 理雖乘載於氣 而氣亦聽命於理 今若以善惡之情 一歸之於氣之清濁 則恐無以見理之實體 而性之爲善也” (*Jolsujaejip*).

10. Nak-ron's difference from Yi Hwang's scholarly line lies in that they advocated the *li-qi* monism (*igirwon ron* 理氣一元論). They, therefore, highlighted the clarity and cleanness of *qi* along with the substantiality and regulatory power of *li*. Notably, Ho-ron and Yi Hwang's school, both reluctant to accept such clarity and cleanness of *qi*, were not actively engaged in developing artistic discourse.

ming Confucianism and Buddhism but stressed the significance of the mind-heart, which can be seen as evidence that he accepted some elements of Wang Yangming Confucian philosophy.¹¹ This trend is also reflected in the Nak-ron's literary and artistic discourse.

Kim Chang-hyeop rejected the writing style of the School of Qin-Han Ancient Literature as the mere copying of archaic sentences and supported the use of a new and creative style, criticizing Heo Mok's ancient studies.¹² There was little room for Qin-Han writers to express their own creative ideas since they copied the sentences and styles of the pre-Qin-Han period. In this respect, the School of Qin-Han Ancient Literature was obviously not present-oriented. For this reason, Kim Chang-hyeop and his followers instead focused on those writing styles developed by the School of Tang-Song Ancient Literature (Dangsong Gomunpa 唐宋古文派) and the Kungan School (Gonganpa 公安派) of the Ming dynasty.¹³ Indeed, the scholars in the School of Tang-Song Ancient Literature wrote simpler sentences than the School of Qin-Han Ancient Literature and were allowed to express their own ideas with more freedom. In particular, scholars of the Kungan School, which was known as the leftist faction of Wang Yangming Confucianism, exhibited exceptional talent in their descriptive writings and were particularly skilled in the genre of travel memoirs (Sim 2004, 137-138). Such exact and vivid descriptions of objects were made possible by the philosophical emphasis on the significance of presentness rather than following the style of earlier model writers. Though Kim and his school publicly rejected the Kungan School's

11. Kim Chang-hyeop highlighted the mind-heart in his theory of perception (*jigak ron* 知覺論). He asserted that loving one's parents and respecting one's elders is the natural law of Heaven and that one's awareness of such obligations is the spiritual perception of one's mind-heart (“愛親敬長者 乃天理之當然 知愛知敬者 乃人心之靈覺”) (*Nongamjip*). This was to say that the perception of the mind-heart is as important as *li*, since *li* is recognized and practiced only after such perception occurs.

12. “老學菴筆記云 漢隸歲久風雨剝蝕 故其字無復鋒鋷 近者杜仲微 乃故用禿筆作隸 自謂得漢刻遺法 豈其然乎 余見近世許穆所謂古篆 正類此 不獨篆隸為然 詩亦有之 古樂府鑿歌鼓吹之類 句字多斷續 往往不可屬讀 此乃有脫缺而然耳 李攀龍輩不察 乃強作佶屈語 以為古體 此正杜仲微之漢隸 許穆之古篆也” (*Nongamjip*).

13. For the Kungan School's acceptance of Ming and Qing dynasty literature, refer to Kho (1996).

style,¹⁴ they surreptitiously read and studied its writings (Ko 1996, 97-98). In this respect, Nak-ron was closer to the attitude of Wang Yangming Confucianism than it was to classic revivalism.¹⁵

As previously mentioned, although Nak-ron scholars agreed in principle to the notions of ancient studies that go beyond the scope of Zhu Xi Confucianism, they were concerned that their philosophical doctrine would lose its prominence when ancient studies exerted practical influence. Accepting the fact that internal changes to Joseon's Zhu Xi Confucianism were necessary, Nak-ron scholars adopted a strategy that allowed for a stable reform process and the sustenance of hegemony by adopting some of the insights of Wang Yangming Confucianism into Zhu Xi Confucianism. In fact, Zhu Xi and Wang Yangming Confucianism were so closely related that drawing a boundary between them became a highly controversial issue.¹⁶

Cheongi 天機 (profound workings of Heaven) is a literary and artistic term roughly defined as the operation of *cheolli* 天理 (*li* of Heaven) in reality through contact with material things. According to Kim Chang-heup's (1653-1722) definition, *cheongi* refers to the mysterious aspect of *mulli* (*li* of matters), while *cheolli* pertains to its righteous aspect. *Cheongi* is the vital will (*hwarui* 活意) or *mulli* manifested in form and energy, and *cheolli* is the right principle (*jeongni* 正理) or *mulli* recognized through nature and Providence.¹⁷ *Cheongi*, unlike

14. “今讀中郎集一邊說禪談佛一邊耽酒戀色此如屠沽兒誦經直是可笑” (*Nongamjip*).

15. Nak-ron scholars were present-oriented to build creative literary discourse void of monotony while still observing some of the existing norms. Their advocacy for the ancient literature of the Tang and Song dynasties and attention to the division between the mind-heart and nature in developing their Mind-Heart Learning (*Simhak* 心學) was part of their attempt to keep a distance from Wang Yangming Confucianism.

16. It is debatable whether the Mind-Heart Learning of Wang Yangming Confucianism inherited and developed that of Zhu Xi Confucianism or the two are distinctly different ideas to begin with. Notably, Wang Yangming himself mentioned that his theory inherited and further developed Zhu Xi's. Refer to Tu (1994, 227-234).

17. “物理有混併而稱其妙者有揀別而求其是者如言化育流行上下昭著則飛潛動植橫豎顛倒舉在其中雖壯壯之交亂強弱之相凌虎豹之咆哮蛇蛟之結蟠總謂之天機可也若必極本窮源取其純粹至善則鳥之仁虎之慈蜂蟻之爲義睢鳩之有別方是天理一則從形氣上看活意也一則從性命上認正理也然飛不可爲潛動不可爲植形氣中自有正理鳥仁虎慈蜂蟻鳩禮性命亦不全合之方爲至善” (*Samyeonjip*).

cheolli, does not exist as an immutable norm. Rather, it comes into being as various and dynamic forms, such as the interaction of male and female, contention between strong and weak, the roaring of tigers and leopards, or the coiling form of a snake.¹⁸ In this sense, *cheongi* is a present-oriented concept that was used to express occurrences in the here and now. This relates to the fact that the depiction and recording of truth and reality were regarded as an important principle of *cheongi ron*.

This emphasis on presentness is demonstrated in Jeong Seon's (1676-1759) true-view landscape paintings. The basic premise of this genre was that artists should only paint a landscape if they have seen it with their own eyes (*Sueunjip*, vol. 2). In this respect, the practice of true-view landscape paintings was present-oriented and thus related to *cheongi ron*. Jeong Seon primarily depicted the scenery of Joseon Korea rather than Chinese landscapes that were simply the products of imagination. The term "true-view" (*jingyeong* 眞景), which implies a sense of the here and now, clearly exhibits the Noron's cultural orientation and their attempts to construct an identity through contemporaneous elements and objects. True-view artists' desire to paint Joseon's landscapes originated from the belief that *li* was also present there. Portraying Joseon's scenery in a painting could be seen as a way of representing the substantiality of *li* with the artist's own brush.

Within the frame of the modern nation-state, the scenes portrayed in Jeong's paintings were connected to notions of nationality, referred to as "the landscapes of Joseon Korea." However, for Jeong and his contemporaries, the landscapes were the true-views of mountains and waters which they experienced firsthand and in which they resided. In other words, those landscapes were the real-life embodiments of the ideals of *li*. This idea was further strengthened in the early eighteenth century by psychological and cultural disconnection from Qing China. The Chinese mountains and waters that had been polluted by the barbarians became unacceptable as objects of paint-

18. "至理源源言外妙 天機歷歷眼中論" (*Jolsujaejip*).

ing; Joseon's scenery was welcomed in their stead for the reasons mentioned above. In short, true-view landscape paintings did not pursue any external or classic models of painting but instead focused on the very scenes apparent to the artist's own eyes.¹⁹ This attitude is clearly seen in Yi Ha-gon's (1677-1724) saying: "If you imitate an earlier style of painting, your brush will be prevented from fully expressing *cheongi*" (Hong 1999, 282). This was in accordance with the main tenet of Nak-ron's cultural discourse, or anti-classic-imitationalism (*ban uigojuui* 反擬古主義).

Nak-ron, *cheongi ron*, and true-view landscape paintings were all built on the same present-oriented discourse that rejected classic revivalism/imitationalism. The near simultaneous emergence of such developments among those intellectuals of the same scholarly and political groups demonstrates their close connections, which allows a comprehensive understanding of the system of thought shared by Nak-ron and its cultural discourse. The emphasis on presentness was closely related to the extension of universality to the present. As *li* inhered equally in both the people of the past and the present, it was acceptable to pay attention to the presence of *li* in the people of the present²⁰ and, therefore, to view the past and the present on a more equal level. Concerns of universality as well as presentness were deeply entrenched in such discourse. Universality also underlied the Nak-ron's notions that human beings and non-human things have the same nature; that sages and commoners have the same mind-heart; and that *cheongi* is endowed equally upon different social classes. The belief underlying true-view landscape paintings that real scenery can serve as themes as valuable as the previously ideal Chinese imaginary landscapes also supports this new perspective on universality.

19. For more discussions on presentness, refer to Hong (1999, 282-283), Yu (2000, 322-323), and E. Park (2006, 137).

20. "蓋古人之事 即今人之事 今人之事 即自家之事 . . . 今雖時有古今之異 跡有文字事物之別 人有古今智愚之分 而其事其理 則未嘗分毫不同 實具於吾心 而嘗發於日用 誠能以今事 而參古事 以今人而體古人 . . . 誠以吾心之理 足以宰萬物之變 管天下之事 而無不達者矣 吾心之理 既不異於古人 今世之事 既不異於前世 雖所遇之境 所遭之時 彼此暫異 而明彼曉此 內外之道本合 則寧有古今之不可一者乎" (*Jolsujaejip*).

The primary reason that Noron rejected classic revivalism in its literary and artistic discourse was the school's concern that the rise of classic revivalism would mean the decline of Zhu Xi Confucianism. Classic revivalism questioned the reliability of the textual foundations of Zhu Xi Confucianism, relativized its scholarly system, and threatened its very existence. For Noron, whose political hegemony was ideologically rationalized by Zhu Xi Confucianism, any such attempts to relativize and objectify that philosophical system would not have been welcome. Meanwhile, Noron intellectuals who had effectively criticized Wang Yangming Confucianism found it difficult to respond adequately to challenges by classic revivalists, as the authority of the Three Dynasties on which classic revivalism relied was absolute in all Confucian traditions.

At the same time, Nak-rong's emphasis on presentness led to deficiencies in its analysis and examination of the past. In fact, Noron intellectuals rarely wrote about Korean history; Yu Gye's (1607-1664) *Yeosa jegang* 麗史提綱 (Brief History of the Goryeo Dynasty) is the only history book written by the Noron faction in the late Joseon period, and even this book covered relatively recent medieval period. Most of the private publications on history were written by Soron and Namin intellectuals (Cho 2009c, 66-67).²¹ Noron intellectuals who assumed the beginning of true history as the time when Zhu Xi Confucianism was first introduced into Korea in the late Goryeo dynasty might have denied the significance of the ancient period as a whole, emphasizing the primacy of medieval Zhu Xi Confucian ethics.

This artistic and scholarly attitude was set apart from the classic revivalism maintained by Soron and Namin intellectuals who were under the influence of the School of Qin-Han Ancient Literature that was developed in the seventeenth-century Ming dynasty. For example, Heo Mok sought to revive the calligraphic styles of ancient

21. O Hui-sang (1763-1833) is one of the intellectuals who took such a stance. “吾東方小中華之稱 非東人自好之言 亦多出於傳記 蓋箕聖東來 以其禮樂文物自隨 理勢之必然 而年代愈遠 文獻雖不足徵 觀乎箕城井田遺址 是其一驗 然則傳記之稱 可知其非徒然也 降自三韓 汔于勝國 貿貿汶汶 其免乎魑結之俗者幾希 本朝嗣興 服事皇明 無異內服 典章冠裳 盡述中國 一洗前代之陋 又不開儒化 彬彬有鄒魯之風 於是始可無愧於小中華之稱” (*Nojujip*).

China²² and Sim Sa-jeong (1707-1769), Jeong Seon's rival, was attracted to the Ming dynasty's painting styles.²³ Sim's inclination towards Chinese painting styles led him to take them as an external model and, in doing so, appears to be showing the influence of the classic imitationalism of the School of Qin-Han Ancient Literature. Later, Shin Wi (1769-1845) expressed his opinion that Sim Sa-jeong was good at replicating old styles of painting but lacked his own way of wielding the brush, whereas Jeong Seon combined old styles with his own.²⁴ The difference between Sim and Jeong probably resulted from two different cultural and philosophical positions. Some ideas advanced by the School of Qin-Han Ancient Literature in seventeenth century China still influenced some Koreans into the early eighteenth century.

Dissolution and Transformation of Nak-ron from the Late Eighteenth to Nineteenth Centuries

The Horak debate developed in response to the changing reality of the eighteenth century. However, the fervor of the Horak debate declined as early as the late eighteenth century. Nak-ron's scholarly tradition, represented by Kim Chang-hyeop, Kim Chang-heup, then Yi Jae (1680-1746), began to lose solidarity drastically from the time of Kim Won-haeng who succeeded them. One of the main reasons for its decline was, above all, that the Horak debate could no longer properly address the changing reality of the late eighteenth century. During the reign of Emperor Qianlong (r. 1735-1796), Qing China progressed into its most prosperous era and the Qing-centered world order became increasingly recognized as legitimate by East Asian intellectuals. It became much more difficult to explain these changes solely in terms of orthodox Neo-Confucian ideology. Moreover, sever-

22. For Heo Mok's calligraphy, refer to D. Kim (1992).

23. For Sim Sa-jeong, refer to Yi (1995) and Kim (1983).

24. “玄齋摸古而自運不足 謙齋自運而摸古 並臻其妙 二家優劣如此(申緯題謙玄合壁畫冊跋)” (*Geunyeok seohwajing*).

al new artistic and scholarly trends, including the Western Learning (Seohak 西學), were imported from Qing China, hence many new scholarly and literary approaches were developed in Joseon Korea from the late eighteenth to the early nineteenth century.

The School of Northern Learning (Bukhakpa 北學派), who extended the ideology of Nak-ron, was one group that accepted the newly rising scholarly trends of this era. Nak-ron's discourse on presentness and universality was reinforced and further developed by Bukhakpa scholars beyond the Nak-ron's discursive scope:

From the perspective of previous generations, people of today certainly would seem lowly. But our ancestors themselves may not have regarded themselves as elevated, either. Read one of the poems written in the past and you will realize that people at that time were also living the present as we do now. In other words, customs change increasingly as the time flows briskly. One drinks in the morning, then it becomes a past event forever once he has left the place in the evening. So, "now" gains its meaning only in contrast to "past," and something "similar" requires another thing "to which" it is similar. When one says two things are similar to each other, they are literally similar, and never the same. They are comparable, but not identical . . . Deok-mu is living in Joseon of today. Its mountains, streams, and climate are different from those of China, and its language and customs are not the same as those of the old Han and Tang dynasties. When one imitates composing methods of China and replicates writing styles of Han and Tang, I only find the content of the work lowly as much as the methods are elevated, and its expression affected as much as the styles are similar to the original (*Yeonamjip*).

Bak Ji-won (1737-1805) stressed that past and present and the natures of different entities are on equal levels and that each of them has its own uniqueness, which extended scholarly awareness of the present. He argued that the writings of today are the writings of the past,²⁵ not-

25. “今之文 猶古之文也” (*Yeonamjip*).

ing that pieces in *Shijing* 詩經 (Book of Odes) are nothing more than records of conversations between men and women on the street.²⁶ Thus, contemporary writings could be considered as orthodox as *Shijing*. The idea was founded on the extension of universality, as demonstrated by the quote: “Nature of a tiger is the same as that of a human being.”²⁷ Through the extension of universality, the present could achieve an equal stance to the past and be accepted as valuable. Bukhakpa’s argument was initially an extension of Nak-ron’s theory, the scope of which it eventually transcended. The equality of present and past and of this and that was an idea already incorporated in Nak-ron’s Neo-Confucian theory. Nak-ron scholars, however, maintained their conservative Neo-Confucian stance and remained cautious about developing such logic, which was a potential risk to their medieval society. Nevertheless, Bukhakpa precipitated the decline of Nak-ron by pushing its own internal logic to the extreme.

Alongside Bukhakpa’s style of thinking, there emerged new attempts to construct a system of practical ethics in the early nineteenth century, breaking from the earlier tradition of sophisticated metaphysics. Hong Gil-ju (1786-1841), who inherited the spirit of Bukhakpa, was a representative figure. These new trends were attributable to deficiencies of Zhu Xi Confucianism in explaining social changes occurring at the time. In addition, various natural phenomena beyond Zhu Xi Confucian *li* were increasingly identified, leading to the criticism of the principles and orders based on it (Cho 2009a, 64-75). It was in this context that Hong created his own concept of *li*. He was highly critical of the Zhu Xi Confucian interpretation of *li*, primarily opposing those Neo-Confucian scholars who attempted to reduce all of the principles and orders of the world into the Great Ultimate (*taegeuk* 太極) (*Pyorong eulcheom*). Hong argued that each entity, such as Heaven, humans, insects, and plants, has its own separate *li*; one must search for the particular *li* unique to each thing

26. “嗚呼 三百之篇 無非鳥獸草木之名 不過閭巷男女之語” (*Yeonamjip*).

27. “夫天下之理一也 虎性惡也 人性亦惡也 人性善則虎之性亦善也 . . . 自天所命而視之 則虎與人乃物之一也 自天地生物之仁而論之 則虎與蝗蠶蜂蟻與人 并畜而不可相悖也” (*Yeonamjip*).

rather than presuppose the one transcendental Great Ultimate. *Li* of events would be unveiled in the process of judging the rights or wrongs of each particular case and *li* of material things would be found as one dealt with the use of each thing. Hong was convinced that there is no single *li* arising from the Great Ultimate that could explain all phenomena. Consequently, his aim was to criticize the metaphysical system of Zhu Xi Confucianism as represented by the Great Ultimate and to find an alternative to it.

Hong's rejection of his inherited Nak-ron tradition is an interesting illustration of the doctrine's decline. His argument was clearly unconventional from the perspective of Nak-ron, which emphasized universality and the oneness of *li* within different things. Hong simplified the concept of *li* into a minimal set of moral ideals to discriminate between right and wrong and by doing so sought to avoid unnecessary metaphysical debates.²⁸ Hong tried to overcome the Nak-ron's overemphasis on *li* by re-conceptualizing it into simpler and more concrete terms.

Nonetheless, this does not mean that Hong turned to Ho-ron, the Nak-ron's opponent. Rather, he rejected the metaphysics of Zhu Xi Confucianism in entirety. His aim was to bypass what he saw as unnecessary metaphysical debates by minimizing and simplifying the conceptual complexity of *li*. Instead, he took an unusually inclusive attitude in including Wang Yangming and Lu Jiuyuan Confucianism (Sangsanhak象山學) into the Confucian pedigree and even argued that Confucian scholars should be freed from the label of Confucian (*Pyorong eulcheom*). In this respect, Hong's criticism of Zhu Xi Confucian metaphysics extended the universality discourse initiated by Nak-ron.

28. “吾之所謂理者 邪正是非之辨而已 事親則何以而為孝 何以而為不孝 事君則何以而為忠 何以而為不忠 遇某事何以則為善 反是則為不善 夫邪正是非之辨 若白黑之分焉 劈之為兩 其界不相犯 特分其界而劈之為難耳 一有所定 而凡天下萬事 無外乎是焉 雖有昔之所無聞觀者 固未嘗不囿乎此也 至若有形之器 觀其形而理著焉 又何論古人之造不造也 今若曰此理本乎一 則窮理者豈將盡詰其已發未發之理 使千百億世之后 無出於豫知之外乎 抑將 祗究其所謂一者 而自謂盡窮天下之理耶 且所謂一者 何也 豈虛空冥 窅之一太極耶 既謂之一 又將何法以窮之也 畫一圈於紙曰 是太極也 太極本無極也 張皇其說 窺窅其旨 千言而萬辭 出入於虛荒罔象之中而曰 此窮理之學也 嗚呼 其於孝悌忠信之實 邪正是非之分 亦遜乎遠矣 故曰 理無事而不在 無物而不在 未嘗本乎一也 卽事而究其是非 卽事之理見矣 卽物而觀其功用 則物之理察矣 又不可一一而豫求也” (*Pyorong eulcheom*).

If Bukhakpa and Hong Gil-ju represented the progressive aspect of Nak-ron's dissolution, regressive decline also took place within the Nak-ron group due to changes in its social status. The concentration of political power in a few families and the declining leadership of *sallim* 山林 (a group of literati who were given no official positions in the government but exerted political power in the mid-Joseon period) led to the decline of the Horak debate and other Neo-Confucian theoretical discussions. From the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, the main interest of leading intellectuals was no longer Neo-Confucianism but rather various artistic and literary trends newly imported from Qing China. The Horak debate lost its vitality and could no longer generate productive discussions, while the discussion on Han Learning (Hanhak 漢學) and classic revivalism attracted more and more scholars.

The Horak debate was dominated in the nineteenth century by conservative *sallim* intellectuals and Neo-Confucians such as Hong Jik-pil (1776-1852), Im Heon-hoe (1811-1876), and O Hui-sang (1763-1833), and had by and large stagnated. The fact that the Ho-ron and Nak-ron exhibited no distinct differences in political thought highlights the similarity of their social and political positions as well as the changes in the social meaning that Neo-Confucianism formerly implied.²⁹

One prominent feature surrounding the nineteenth-century Horak debate was the rise of relatively neutral and objective positions that criticized both Nak-ron and Ho-ron arguments. For example, Kim Mae-sun (1776-1840), a fourth-generation descendent of Kim Chang-heup, evaluated that Nak-ron committed a minor mistake by confusing the different types of *qi* and Ho-ron committed a major mistake by confusing *qi* with *li*.³⁰ Although a descendant of Nak-ron in terms

29. In the nineteenth century, both Ho-ron and Nak-ron developed their Neo-Confucian discussions based on the orthodox ideologies of Zhu Xi and Song Si-yeol. Refer to K. Park (1994, 247).

30. “本然者理一而已 偏全者 隨人物之形氣而有不齊也 美惡者偏全之中 各有不齊也 美惡可變 偏全不可變 偏全美惡 雖有可變不可變之分 而其為氣質則一也 其為氣質 則一而所指則不同 湖中以偏全本然 混而言之 理與氣混者也 洛中一偏之論 以偏全美惡 混而言之 氣與氣混者也 氣與氣混 小錯也 理與氣混 大錯也” (*Daesanjip*).

of scholarly pedigree, Kim was critical of both Nak-ron and Ho-ron. Like Kim, Yi Hang-ro (1792-1868) also expressed his disagreement with Nak-ron and Ho-ron positions in neutral terms.³¹ Such examples show that the Horak debate came to be examined more objectively in the nineteenth century. Ironically, this objective assessment of the Horak debate was only made possible by its reduced prominence as a major topic of discussion in Joseon intellectual discourse.

Responses of the Nak-ron's scholarly lineage to the changing reality of the mid-nineteenth century onward can be understood in two ways: the first is the Inner Cultivation Theory (*naesuron* 內修論) maintained by orthodox Neo-Confucian Jeon U (1841-1922) and his fellow Nak-ron intellectuals, and the second is the Theory of Eastern Way and Western Technology (*dongdoseogi ron* 東道西器論) initiated by moderate reformist bureaucrats. These two positions, albeit they emerged from different contexts, shared the same objective of defending Confucian civilization from external challenges. Examining these two approaches will identify the forms that Nak-ron discourse on presentness and universality of *li* took in its last stages.

Jeon U can be seen as the most conservative among the Nak-ron descendants because he was a member of the orthodox line, which had been represented by Bak Yun-won (1734-1799)³² and Hong Jik-pil of the Nak-ron scholarly lineage. This line can be traced back even further to Bak Yun-won's teacher Kim Won-haeng (1702-1772), Bak being one of his most conservative students. A reason why Jeon accepted Bak's rather passive Inner Cultivation Theory may lie partly in his scholarly lineage. Jeon emphasized the *qi* aspect of the mind-heart and its dependency on nature through his propositions such as *simbonseong* 心本性 ("The mind-heart relies on nature."), *simhakseong* 心學性 ("The mind-heart must learn from nature."), *seongjon simbi* 性尊心卑 ("Nature is noble while the mind-heart is vulgar."), and *seongsa*

31. “就其氣質不同之中 循其本然之所同者而已矣 是以本然者 雖同而所值之氣 不能不異 而有萬殊之別 所乘之氣 雖異而其本然者則不害為同 此所謂異中識其同 同中識其異者也 何可膠於一偏而轉見 支離迷誤乎” (*Hwaseojip*).

32. For more on Bak Yun-won, refer to Cho (2007, 298-299).

simje 性師心弟 (“Nature teaches the mind-heart.”) (*Ganjaejip*). With such emphases, he unintentionally made his cultivation approach closer to the Ho-ron’s advocacy for the nature-centered cultivation of one’s morality.³³ O Hui-sang’s *simbonseon bulgasi ron* 心本善不可恃論 (“The theory that the mind-heart is originally good but unreliable.”) can also be understood in this context.³⁴

Nak-ron scholars tended to regard the mind-heart not merely as *qi*, but as the essence of *qi* (*giji jeongsang* 氣之精爽). It is not the actualized temperament (*gijil* 氣質) but clean and clear unity (*damil* 湛一); thus, sages and commoners shared the same original goodness of mind-heart (Yu 1985, 433). Nak-ron’s moral cultivation approach centering on the mind-heart was developed on this notion. Jeon U was logically faithful to Nak-ron’s argument, which is in line with the above trends, but leaned toward Ho-ron in terms of his positions regarding relevant issues. By refuting Yi Jin-sang (1818-1886) and Yi Hang-ro’s argument that the mind-heart in itself is *li*, he was able to advance a method of moral cultivation centered on nature. However, his overemphasis on nature as a regulator of the mind-heart reduced the autonomy of the mind-heart and consequently his position appeared closer to that of Ho-ron despite his intentions.

Before Jeon U, Im Heon-hoe made a more aggressive argument than Ho-ron’s. In his *ogidagwa ron* 五氣多寡論 (the theory that the five types of *qi* are different in amount for each person),³⁵ Im argued that there were basic differences between sages and commoners and that human nature was fundamentally different from non-human nature (Shin 1981, 103). This argument was obviously contrary to Nak-ron’s extension of universality in the early eighteenth century. Some Nak-ron scholars proceeded in this contrary direction as early as the mid-eighteenth century. One of the Nak-ron lines of thought, represented by Min U-su (1694-1756) and Kim Jong-hu (1721-1780) who studied

33. Nak-ron’s self-cultivation focused on the mind-heart whereas that of Ho-ron focused on nature. Refer to Moon (2006, 311-321).

34. “程子曰 心本善 發於思慮 則有善有惡 朱子曰 心本善 亦能流而入於惡者也 下得本字 所以別於性之純善也 苟能精思 默認於本與純之間 則理與氣之分 庶可推究 心之不可恃 性之爲準則 且可得以知矣” (*Nojujip*).

35. For more on the theory, refer to Kwon (1984, 108).

under Yi Jae, drew closer to Ho-ron ideas in terms of the mind-heart and nature. These scholars labeled themselves as the politically conservative Byeokpa 僻派 together with Ho-ron intellectuals (Cho 2007, 301-310), reflecting the growing conservative tendency of Nak-ron.

The dialogue that took place between Im Heon-hoe, Jeon U, and Shin Gi-seon (1851-1909) clearly demonstrates the dissolution and decline of Nak-ron. When Jeon asked, “What should we do if the barbarian Qing emperor invites us to participate in his court so as to establish a reign of virtue?” (Shin 1981, 106), Im responded negatively. However, Shin, a proponent of the Eastern Way and Western Technology Theory, answered positively: “As the barbarians have the same human nature as ours, and, as long as they emulate the sages and treat us in proper manner, why should we reject their invitation?” (Shin 1981, 106). In fact, Han Chinese Xu Heng’s 許衡 (1209-1281) official career in service to the Yuan dynasty was evaluated positively in Nak-ron intellectual tradition. The Nak-ron’s evaluation of Xu, however, was criticized by Ho-ron, who argued that Nak-ron did not distinguish between the civilized and the barbarian (*hwai mubun* 華夷無分). In this respect, Shin stood closer to the traditional position of Nak-ron than Im and Jeon did. Moreover, Shin clearly opposed Im’s *ogidagwa ron*.³⁶ There was a clear difference between the Inner Cultivation Theory and the Eastern Way and Western Technology Theory even though both were developed by students of one teacher, Im Heon-hoe. Only the proponents of the Eastern Way and Western Technology Theory succeeded the development of ideas on presentness and universality of the eighteenth century Nak-ron intellectuals. As we can see in the case of Im Heon-hoe and Jeon U, the Nak-ron doctrine was losing support even among Nak-ron scholars, evidencing its dissolution.

At the same time, some significant changes occurred in the literature and arts of the nineteenth century. Many new trends, including *seongnyeong ron* 性靈論 (the theory that everyone has the faculty of

36. “箕善對曰 小子之意 則不然 人物之稟氣五行之分殊 本無多寡 而惟其清濁不同” (Shin 1981, 103).

being inspired that is necessary for composing poems focusing on poetic spirit and uniqueness rather than poetic form) and *siseon ilchi ron* 詩禪一致論 (the theory on the unity of poetry and zen) in literature, the calligraphic styles of Beiwei 北碑 dynasty, and literati paintings of the Southern School emerged and developed. Kim Jeong-hui's emphasis on pure and elegant intention (*munjahyang seogwongi* 文字香 書卷氣) and his rejection of the mundane progressed together with such new literary and artistic styles. The middle-class poet Choe Seong-hwan, who was influenced by *seongnyeong ron*, collected and edited Chinese poems in his *Seongnyeongjip* 性靈集 (Anthology of Poems in Accordance with Seongnyeong Theory).³⁷ These new literary and artistic styles were developed mostly by Kim Jeong-hui and his group, which partly showed the cultural tastes of the ruling group at that time. Though it is not easy to characterize the ruling group's literary and artistic tastes, their basic orientation was based on an emphasis on abstractness and conceptualities. This is certainly different from the spirit of true-view landscape paintings, which focused on reality and presentness. A modern scholar described this nineteenth-century orientation as the loss of a sense of reality caused by the excessive desire for escape from the mundane (Hong 1999, 460).

The considerable similarities between the painting styles of nineteenth-century Joseon and contemporary Chinese paintings are due to the active cultural and social exchange between Joseon and Qing China of the time. In fact, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, some Nak-ron intellectuals from among Yi Jae's followers developed the style of conceptualized true-view landscape paintings (*sauijeok jingyeong sansuhwa* 寫意的 眞景山水畫).³⁸ Subsequently, Bukhakpa also became interested in conceptualized rather than true views, as well

37. The emphasis on universality in *seongnyeong ron* is seen clearly in Choe's statement that "Every person is equipped with nature and emotions, that people of the past and I share the same nature, and that what they liked is what my nature likes" ("惟是一派性情 則人所以有各自具者 我何嘗與古人異哉 . . . 古人之性 即我之性 古人之性之所好 即我性之所好 以古人之性道古人之所好 直不過如是也 以我之性道我之所好 亦直不過如是也 是古人之所言者 即我之言也 豈可以不經我口 遂謂之非我之心哉") (*Seongnyeongjip*).

38. For more on conceptualized true-view landscape paintings, refer to E. Park (2002).

as in the literati paintings of the Southern School. Critics sharply distinguished the painted representations of landscapes from real landscapes and thus lost interest in true-view landscape paintings and their attempts to represent exactly what the artist had seen with his own eyes. Instead, they took the process of expressing the artist's spirit as the primary virtue of painting, admitting that a picture is inherently a mere imitation of the truth (Kho 2007, 240). This notion led to the tendency to depict conceptualized views. In addition, the change in objects of painting from Joseon to Qing Chinese landscapes may have been regarded as a reasonable choice for those who earnestly desired to import Qing Chinese culture and technology. Such a tendency was further developed in the nineteenth century by Kim Jeong-hui, who actively engaged in interaction with contemporary Qing Chinese artists and intellectuals.

However, viewing these cultural phenomena simply in terms of a binational contrast of Joseon Korea and Qing China is incorrect. In the late eighteenth century, some Joseon intellectuals, including those who stressed the significance of Bukhak, began to interpret the Central Civilization as a universally applicable concept (Cho 2009a). In this respect, they accepted literary and artistic trends that were transmitted from China as part of "universal culture," not as particular to China. Thus, it is not historically accurate to discuss these cultural trends only in terms of nationality. Rather, the focus should be placed on the revivalism implied in these trends.³⁹ At that time, the representation of China by Joseon artists was another form of revivalism. The desire to escape from the mundane and emphases on abstractness and conceptualities were all closely related to the dream of returning to the idealized past represented by China.⁴⁰ Here it is worth noting

39. Kho's definition of the nineteenth-century landscape paintings as formative arts based on calligraphic and painting styles of classic masters rather than only as depictions of scenery is relevant to the revivalist ideas in those landscape paintings (Kho 2007, 235).

40. Regarding this issue, Park interpreted that the past pursued by Yun Du-seo (1668-1715) in his work refers to the traditional style of literati painting and conceptualized landscapes (E. Park 2002, 336).

that Joseon artists viewed figures in contemporary paintings of the era clad in Chinese clothing to be dressed in classically elegant style, expressing the aesthetic of anti-secularism (Kho 2007, 284).

This revivalism of nineteenth-century Joseon was different from the classic revivalism of the seventeenth century. The purpose and objectives of revivalism changed in accordance with time and context. Though it is very difficult to define the nineteenth-century revivalism in a clear-cut manner, the intentions of contemporary Joseon scholars to synthesize and abstract the traditions of the past are clear.⁴¹ Nineteenth-century revivalism was abstract and conceptual, overwhelming the ideas of actuality and presentness that prevailed in Joseon Korea. In this respect, there were contrary orientations between “past/abstractness/conceptuality” and “present/reality/actuality” underlying the surface confrontation between what was Chinese versus Korean. To the nineteenth-century Korean revivalists, the meaning of past and present was more fundamental than the nationality of the objects that they dealt with.

The flight from the mundane emphasized in the aesthetics of nineteenth-century paintings signified an escape from the degenerate present and a return to the ideal past set in China. This trend was quite different from Jeong Seon’s true-view landscape paintings of the eighteenth century, which stressed the significance of reality and presentness. Nineteenth-century revivalists developed their cultural approach primarily by abstraction from the concrete cultures of the past and this phenomenon was seen as an important aspect of the century’s literary and artistic characteristics. The past that they conceived and constructed could not be explained simply in terms of revivalism. Rather, their past was, in a sense, a newly made and abstracted past. From these cultural phenomena, it is possible to infer how the discursive structure of Nak-ron dissolved and why Jeong Seon’s style of true-view landscape paintings lost popularity in nineteenth-century Joseon.

41. This tendency can also be found in the interest in the calligraphic styles of Beiwei Dynasty and in the poetics (Chen 2000, 296-298; Chung 1992, 201).

Conclusion

The Horak debate and the Nak-ron school of thought were developed in opposition to the discourse of classic revivalism. Trying to solve the problem of creating a new self-identity within the tradition of Zhu Xi Confucianism, Noron scholars, particularly Nak-ron scholars, developed their discussions on the presentness and universality of *li* in line with Zhu Xi Confucianism. This tendency was undoubtedly influenced by their views on reality and political stances. Their discourse on culture and art was also constructed on this philosophical foundation. Their ideas were embodied in the promotion of *cheongi ron*, Tang-Song Ancient Literature and true-view landscape paintings. Noron intellectuals assumed a critical attitude toward any form of classic imitationalism and, in doing so, they turned their attention to and advocated Joseon, which represented the presentness that they supported in their opposition to classic imitationalism.

These trends of Nak-ron eventually faced both internal and external obstacles. New ideas, including Wang Yangming Confucianism, Han Learning, and Western Learning, began to fracture Nak-ron's ideological system. The dissolution of Nak-ron was brought about by many different factors in the late eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries. As a consequence, the discourse on presentness and universality that Nak-ron scholars maintained began to collapse. From the late eighteenth century and onwards as the discussion on the Nak-ron's concepts of presentness and universality expanded and contracted in an unbalanced manner, Nak-ron discourse showed signs of weakness. As the eighteenth century progressed into the nineteenth century, Nak-ron discourse became increasingly unstable, losing its vitality. Looking back from the perspective of the nineteenth century, Nak-ron discourse on presentness and universality developed from the peculiar situation of Joseon in the early eighteenth century. Hence, its inherent instability and limitations were inevitably exposed by both internal and external philosophical challenges, which must be considered to fully understand the particular characteristics of the Nak-ron discourse. Perhaps the short-lived popularity of true-view landscape

paintings in early eighteenth-century Joseon and the enduring dominance of conceptualized literati paintings among Joseon scholars after the mid-eighteenth century can be seen as historical evidence for the inherent instability of Nak-ron.

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