

Confucian Charisma and the True Way of the Moral Politician: Interpreting the Tension between Toegye and Nammyeong in Late Sixteenth Century Joseon

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This study examines the conflict between Toegye Yi Hwang and Nammyeong Jo Shik, the leading Neo-Confucian scholars of 16th century Joseon Korea. Previous studies have attributed the conflict to either personal temperament or philosophical differences. However, this study finds the fundamental reason of their conflict in the political problem: whether an individual Sarim scholar's moral charisma is compatible with the formation of the Sarimpa and their politicization. Toegye advocated the politics of lineage in order to construct Confucian moral society. His private academy movement played a catalytic role in producing Confucian scholar-officials. By so doing, Toegye entrusted Confucian scholars with actual political power. However, on the other hand, he made the king a symbolic figure by exalting the sacred lineage of kingship, instead of the individual king's discretionary power. In contrast, Nammyeong found in Toegye's project a critical moral problem. For him, Toegye's politics of lineage was nothing but a justification for the routinization of the individual scholar's moral charisma. He thought a king was the sole legitimate political ruler, and thus, he did not believe Confucian scholars should replace the king as actual political performers. For him, the sole and original mission of Confucian scholars was to admonish a king, thereby making him a sage-king. This paper argues that this approach is conducive to a deepened understanding of the nature of Confucian politics in general.

Keywords: Moral charisma, politicization, Confucian scholar-official, politics of lineage, power, authority

Introduction

What led the leading Neo-Confucian scholars in the sixteenth century, Toegye Yi Hwang (1501-1570) and Nammyeong Jo Shik (1501-1572), to be at odds with one another? And why did they never even meet each other? These are the intriguing questions for those studying traditional Korean intellectual history.

Both were well recognized by their contemporaries as the most prominent and erudite Neo-Confucian scholars (*Sarim*) of the time and both lived near one another in Gyeongsang province. Coincidentally, they were of the same age, which made them more personally tied. Moreover, through their correspondence, we can feel their personal respect for each other. What then prevented their meeting?

Many studies comparing Toegye and Nammyeong have found the source of their differences in either personal temperament or philosophical orientation (Kwon In-ho 1995; Park Byeong-ryeon 1997; Son Mun-ho 1997; Kim Yun-je 1991). According to the first proposition, Toegye's modest and introverted personality was quite uneasy with Nammyeong's straightforward and extroverted masculinity. But this can be easily dismissed because, in fact, Toegye was not one to shy away from confrontation and debate as shown by his famous seven-year-long philosophical debates with Gobong Ki Dae-seung. For Nammyeong's part, he is well known to have enjoyed philosophical and political discussions with other scholars, even eccentric ones like Yi Hang and Yi Ji-ham. Compared with the first, the second proposition regarding philosophical difference seems more persuasive. There are key differences in their emphasis of key Neo-Confucian philosophical concepts (Kwon In-ho 2001; Kim Chung-yeol 2001).¹

However, if philosophical differences were the source of conflict, it is conceivable that this would have stimulated intense philosophical interactions given both philosophers' scholarly inquisitiveness. Hence, this proposition, in spite of its partial applicability, does not fully account for their "official" confrontation.

For a better understanding of the apparent discrepancy between their "personal" respect and "official" confrontation, political factors should be taken into account. Even "friends" can part company when political questions are involved.² Indeed, nothing better constitutes things official than political issues. In this regard, it is important to note that Nammyeong's discontent with Toegye focused on his participation in King Jungjong's and King Myeongjong's govern-

1. Both studies point out that Nammyeong's Neo-Confucian philosophy was more focused on *Gi* (vital force) and *Shim* (Mind-and-Heart) than *Li* (principle), which was Toegye philosophy's main concern.

2. It should be clarified that although this paper examines the confrontation between Toegye and Nammyeong, it focuses exclusively on their 'political ideas' at the formative stage of the rule of *Sarim* (*Sarim jeongchi*) in the late sixteenth century. It is qualitatively different from the confrontation between the *Hungupa* and the *Sarimpa* in the earlier period. It is for this reason that this paper claims to look into the confrontation between friends, not foes.

ments, in which the prospective young Neo-Confucian literati were massively purged. Especially, after watching Jo Gwang-jo faction's Ideal Political Movement foiled in the *gimyo sahw*a (the literati purge of 1519), Nammyeong completely discarded his aspiration to be part of it. He never applied for civil examinations, and declined all government offices offered six times by both governments. By contrast, Toegye began his bureaucratic career in 1534, culminating in 1553 when he was appointed headmaster of the National Academy. Therefore, at stake was how to understand (or legitimate) a Confucian scholar's participation in "corrupted" government. This question later led to more general issues like the "collectivization"—thereby "politicization"—of Confucian scholars' moral authority, which was dramatized in the private academy movement and the nature (and latitude) of the king's authority.

Thus, being understood as a political conflict, the confrontation between Toegye and Nammyeong can be construed as an internal conflict within the *Sarim* who had maintained their political group identity in protesting against early political realists (*Hungupa*) in central government. The question is (1) why the *Sarim*, at the point of seizing political power, were internally split, and (2) how to adequately conceptualize such an intra-*Sarim* conflict. The famous dichotomy of "self-cultivation" (*sugi*) and "governing others" (*chiin*) that tends to relate Toegye to the former and Nammyeong to the latter seems to be, despite its analytical usefulness, limited in a full understanding of this intra-conflict.³ For it was indeed Nammyeong who never joined in real politics and leveled caustic criticism at bureaucracy, intransigently persisting in the single greatest value of self-cultivation (*sugi*). Given this problematic, I find it more useful and plausible to trace the conceptual separation and development of morality and political efficacy. Originally inseparable, the two concepts came to confront one another, making it possible for Nammyeong to appear to be more of a political realist than Toegye, despite his strong stance of "non-involvement" in real politics. This calls for a new concept, perhaps transcending Confucian discourse, that can analyze this complicated, and even paradoxical, process, in which two key Confucian concepts become mutually exclusive.

In this article, I characterize the conflict between Toegye and Nammyeong as focusing on the ruling legitimacy of the Confucian scholars who, after long political hardships, came to seize political power. In other words, I argue that

3. See Park Byeong-ryeon 2001.

their confrontation centered on the question of whether a Confucian scholar's personal morality could possibly be transformed to political resources, more specifically, of whether a Confucian scholar's moral life could be compatible with a scholar-official's political/bureaucratic life. In this perspective, I adopt Max Weber's analytical concept of legitimacy, particularly his theory of charismatic authority. According to Weber (1968: 241), charisma, in its typical type, is purely personal excellence, being religious, military, aesthetic, or moral. Central to this concept is that once it fulfills its original mission, it becomes routinized and turns into tradition (Weber 1958: 262, 297). The idea of the highly intensive transition from pure charisma to its routinized form will provide a profound insight into the nature of the conflict between Toegye and Nammyeong. It can be divided into three categories: (1) Individual scholar's moral charisma versus its collectivization and thereby politicization; (2) Correspondingly, a Confucian scholar's (private) moral life versus a Confucian scholar-official's political and bureaucratic life; (3) A Confucian king's pure charisma as king-teacher versus the lineage of the kingship (*wang-tong*), which eventually engenders more perpetuating and powerful tension between the lineage of the orthodox tao (*do-tong*) and the lineage of the kingship (*wang-tong*).

In making this point, I enlist the help of Mencius. Mencius' notion of a "heroic scholar (*hogeol ji sa*)" clearly illustrates a pure form of a Confucian scholar's moral charisma.⁴ In fact, Mencius explores why the very concept of a heroic scholar vis-à-vis the king had to be introduced into the Confucian discourse by grappling with such questions as the routinization of the kingship and the transfer of the lineage of the orthodox tao from the king to the Confucian scholars. All the more important is that although they seldom explicitly alluded to Mencius, the debate between Toegye and Nammyeong undoubtedly revolved around the "Mencian problematic," that is how to understand (or legitimate) a Confucian scholar's moral charisma vis-à-vis a king's power and bureaucracy. In conclusion, I discuss why this conflict goes beyond a personal confrontation and how it could contribute to a more profound understanding of the complex nature of the Confucian politics in general.

4. Wm. Theodore de Bary (1991: 4-8) called Confucian's individual mission and personal commitment to the service of mankind a "prophetic voice." Given the fact that the concept of charisma was originally introduced by a Strassburg church historian and jurist, Rudolf Sohm, in his discussion of ancient Judaism prophets' religious power, I believe the concept of Confucian scholar's charisma remarkably echoes de Bary's insight.

A Heroic Scholar

One of the troubles of Confucianism is that the peaceful transmission of kingship to the virtuous person (*seonyang*) deteriorated into a hereditary transmission system once the throne was handed down to Qi, a son of Yu, the legendary sage-king and the founder of the Hsia dynasty (*Mencius* 5A: 6). But this incident implies more than a mere modification of one of the principles of Confucianism. This story introduces the concept of state into the Confucian discourse because the first hereditary transmission of the throne implicitly speaks of the birth of the state and therewith institutionalized kingship. The question is whether Confucian culture can correspond with a Confucian state and consequently whether a Confucian scholar as a carrier of the Confucian culture can coincide with a bureaucrat of a particular state. It is conceivable that Confucian universalism would be critically impaired when it is squeezed into a particular political entity. So, too, would a Confucian scholar's cultural identity. Every state official is doomed to seek the state's national interests, which would sometimes massively erode the principal maxim of morality.

Throughout *Mencius*, Mencius presents himself as a vehement critic of the institutionalized/hereditary kingship. Yet, his attitude toward the first instance of a father-son transmission of the throne is somewhat ambiguous or even ad hoc. Mencius interprets it as a form of the ideal transmission of the throne by contending that Yu's son, Qi, was himself the charismatic figure preferred by Heaven and the people in contrast to his competitor Yi. For Mencius, it could hardly be possible to question the legendary sage-king Yu's moral integrity by regarding this event as signaling the institutionalization of the kingship. It is undeniable, however, that Mencius' defense of monarchy left room for later theorists to justify monarchical absolutism based on the theory of primogeniture. It is for this reason that the single greatest political and ethical mission of Confucians was preventing one man's monarchy from becoming a tyranny. Hereafter, the myth of the sage-kingship is deconstructed; the king's authority as king-teacher (*gunsā*) can hardly be sustained. In principle, a sage-king is not considered one to seek *material* interests either for himself or for the state, a demarcated particular entity over which he presides.

Consequently, the institutionalization of the kingship resulted in a radical distinction between former sage-kings (*seonwang*) and later mediocre kings (*huwang*), for the advent of the state necessitated the pursuit of material interests, a predicament in which later kings were trapped. Here arises a key ques-

tion: If a king under a monarchical system is far from the image of the legendary sage-kings, how can he possibly maintain political order that is harmonious with the moral order of nature? Mencius' alternative, instead of inventing a new form of regime, was to exalt the authority of virtuous scholars over the kingship.⁵ Mencius, asked why he was reluctant to meet feudal lords, justified himself by means of the old episode of Zi Si and King Mu:

King Mu frequently went to see Zi Si. "How did kings of states with a thousand chariots in antiquity make friends with virtuous Confucian scholars?" he asked. Zi Si was displeased. "What the ancients talked about," said he, "was serving them, not making friends with them." The reason for Zi Si's displeasure was surely this. "In point of position, you are the prince and I am your subject. How dare I be a friend with you? In point of virtue, it is you who ought to serve me. How can you presume to be friends with me?" (5B: 7)

According to Mencius, the king and the charismatic Confucian scholar divide rank (the symbol of political power) and virtue. This reminds us of the western medieval dualism: The emperor's power and the pope's authority (Schmitt 1976: 42). Mencius, singling out rank, age, and virtue as three things revered in the world, insisted that the king who possessed only one of the three should come to see the virtuous scholar who possessed virtue, the most valuable of the three (2B: 2). The corollary is that kings cannot see the virtuous Confucian scholar except by showing him due respect and observing due courtesy. The idea that the virtuous scholar can be his subject is thus unthinkable (7A: 8). Mencius defined such a moral hero as a "heroic scholar (*hogeol ji sa*)" (2A: 10). As such, according to Mencius, the Confucian scholar's moral authority overwhelms the king's political power.

Once charisma, a personal quality in its pure form, is routinized, a rule of the handover of the throne to a virtuous man changes into a hereditary succession and therewith a charismatic king by a charismatic lineage of the kingship (*wang-tong*). The driving force of such routinization is the people's desire that transforms the charismatic blessing from a unique, transitory gift of grace into a per-

5. It is for this reason that Ming Tai-zu (the first emperor of the Ming dynasty) promulgated not to use *Mencius* as a textbook in the royal lecture.

manent possession of everyday life (Weber 1968: 1121). Out of such desire, the state is being formed, and at the same time, pure ethical-religious charisma wanes and finally becomes mixed up with worldly interest. No doubt, it is a paradox of charisma. First, the religious charisma, anti-economic and anti-political in its typical sense, is politicized and, second, thisworldly political power and otherworldly ethical-religious authority, despite their original antagonism and competition, intermingle together in the end (Kim Sangjun 2001: 34). In this way, despite the original confrontation, pure charismatic authority gets combined with tradition.

Mencius could not trust the charismatic authority of the kings of his own period—a time when it had been routinized for centuries. In his judgment, a hereditary transmission was a traditionalized form of charisma that was originally endowed by Shang-ti (the Lord on high) to the ancient sage-kings. Instead he asserted that the ethical-religious charisma, once having been possessed by the sage-kings, had been transferred to Confucian scholars like himself. Mencius insisted that the lineage of the orthodox Tao (*do-tong*) fell upon him, which had been handed down from Confucius to Zeng-zu and Zi Si. What then is the Confucian scholar's charisma according to Mencius? Above all, if he wants to be an excellent moral knight, the Confucian scholar must fully understand his own nature. Mencius says:

For a man to give full realization to his heart is for him to understand his own nature, and a man who knows his own nature will know Heaven. By retaining his heart and nurturing his nature he is serving Heaven. Whether he is going to die young or live to a ripe old age makes no difference to his steadfastness of purpose. It is through awaiting whatever is to befall him with a perfected character that he stands firm on his proper destiny (7A: 1).

The *Doctrine of the Mean* writes, “what Heaven conferred is called the nature.” The Mind-and-Heart (*shim*), in which the nature dwells, is like a mirror reflecting Heaven. It is a core premise of Mencian optimism that man is able to realize the Heavenly will by thorough reflection of his own nature. Ontologically, therefore, the ethics of Mind-and-Heart is preceded by the metaphysics of Heaven (Kim Hyeong-hyo 1990: 100-101). Central to this assumption is ontological optimism underlying the belief in the continuation between nature and history or Heavenly Way and man's Way. The question is whether this ontological opti-

mism really guarantees practical optimism in actual human life. Mencius continues:

That is why Heaven, when it is about to place a great burden on a man, always first tests his resolution, exhausts his frame and makes him suffer starvation and hardship, and frustrates his efforts so as to shake his deficiencies. As a rule, a man can mend his ways only after he has made mistakes. It is only when a man is frustrated in mind and in his deliberations that he is able to innovate (6B: 15).

In a debate with Gao-zu, Mencius argued that human beings differ from brutes *only* because they had benevolence and righteousness, that is, morality, which empowers man to overcome appetites and passions (6A: 4). Appetites and passions for “material interests” calls upon an ethical test for the Confucian scholar because “only a [truly] virtuous Confucian scholar can have a constant heart in spite of a lack of constant means of support.” By contrast, ordinary people cannot have constant hearts if they are without constant means that fulfill their worldly desires (1A: 7). As such, the “anti-economic force” is the very essence of charismatic authority. As Weber (1968: 1113) contends, pure charisma is opposed to all systematic economic activities, for charisma is by nature not a continuous institution, but in its pure type the very opposite. Only if one overcomes the temptation of material interests can he aspire to be a true charismatic moral hero. Therefore, at the heart of Confucian scholar’s moral charisma is the unflinching belief that the Way of the ancient sage-kings alone is the sole engine for action. The desire to actualize the Way constitutes “ideal interests,” the very conceptual counterpart and practical competitor of material interests (Kim Sangjun 2001: 19).

Mencius’ notion of a heroic Confucian scholar (*hogeol ji sa*) is crucial to understanding the nature of conflict between Toegye and Nammyeong. Certainly, they differed in their political ideas on whether the routinization of scholarly charisma was inevitable for the rule of Neo-Confucian scholar-officials. Their debates revolved around whether the Confucian scholar’s pure charisma was compatible with his bureaucratic life and whether Confucian scholars could be grouped as a political force without any critical impediment of each *individual* scholar’s moral integrity. These questions drove the Confucian scholars to take issue with such political issues of the time as the private academy (*seowon*) movement, the formation of the *Sarimpa* as a political force, and

eventually the extent of the king's authority. In the polemical heydays, Toegye defended the attempt to institutionalize the rule of Neo-Confucian scholars whereas Nammyeong continued the practice of the pure form of scholarly charisma. In following sections, I will briefly discuss sixteenth century Korean politics⁶ and examine each philosopher's political ideas in turn.

Political Setting

It is a well-established belief that the literati purges (*sahwa*), the biggest political tragedy in mid Joseon Korea, happened as part of changes in the main political actors. The *Sarimpa*, orthodox Neo-Confucians in rural areas, challenged the *Hungupa*, meritorious elites in central government (Choe Yi-don 1997; Kim Don 1997; Wagner 1974). The *Sarimpa*'s political slogan was "a collective rule by the king and the Confucian scholar-officials" (*gunsin gongchi*). Implicit, but central, to this slogan is that the king's religious charisma, if not his military charisma, had been transferred to the Confucian scholars.⁷ The Ideal Politics Movement (*jichijuui undong*) promoted by Jo Gwang-jo (1482-1519) was essentially a drastic political endeavor to moralize real politics by exerting Confucian scholars' charisma over bureaucracy (Son Mun-ho 1997: 317-319).⁸

Sarimpa, staggeringly defeated and purged at the gimyo sahwa (the purge of 1519) and the *ulsa sahwa* (the purge of 1545) however, finally came to political power during the later period of King Myeongjong's reign, when the power of queen Munjeong and her brother Yun Won-hyeong overtly waned. Many *Sarim* scholars, retired to rural areas and, having been teaching young students Confucian classics, began to enter the central government (Lee Ki-baik 1991: 206). But there were still fundamental political problems with which this "new"

6. It is to be noted that this paper examines the *late* sixteenth century when the old politics (*Hungu jeongchi*) came to end and orthodox Neo-Confucians (*Sarim*) seized power. Therefore, this paper does not purport to generalize the whole framework of Toegye's (and Nammyeong's) political ideas. Nor is my purpose to compare personal moral integrity of both scholars. This paper examines their political ideas in a particular historical moment.

7. According to Yi Seong-mu (1999: 13), the fundamental reason that *Sarim* overwhelmed king's power in the Choseon dynasty was that there had been no 'conquest dynasty' since the Silla dynasty on the Korean peninsula. In other words, he argued that the rule of Neo-Confucian scholars was a natural outcome of the long-lasting peace.

8. Nammyeong, despite his personal respect for Jo Gwang-jo, disagreed on the idea of *Sarim*-led political reformation.

politics had to contend. To begin with, the *Sarim*, now at the helm, had to decide whether or not they would embrace old politicians, some of who obviously had helped them to be appointed in central offices. The *Sarim* were split on this question into two groups: The Westerner (*seoin*) insisting on accepting remnant *Hungupa* for the sake of political stability, and the Easterner (*dongin*) preferring moral purity to political compromise (Choe Yi-don 1997: 191-196; Kim Don 1997: 313-314; Yi Taejin 1989: 40).

However, a more fundamental question was raised within the Easterners. It was the question about the political and moral qualification of the *Sarim* themselves who emerged as the main political force. Nammyeong's criticism of Toegye revolves around several key questions: Could morality be collectivized or even politicized? Could each Confucian scholar's individual morality be institutionalized into bureaucracy? What then would be the latitude of the king's power standing vis-à-vis scholar-officials? In the following sections, I will discuss how these broad theoretical questions were scrutinized, contested, and crystallized in both philosophers' political ideas by comparing and contrasting them across some key issues.

Toegye and the Politics of Lineage

1. The Lineage of Scholarship: The Sociological implication of the Private Academy Movement

The continual bafflement of their political ideals by the purges made most *Sarim* retire to rural areas, where they began to build as sanctuaries for preserving the authentic Confucian spirit the private academies (*seowon*) (Choe Yeong-ho 1999; Jeong Manjo 1997). These were expected to be places for the scholars to excise the true ideal of the "learning for self-cultivation" (*wigi jihak*). Among others, Toegye was one of the key advocates of the private academy movement.⁹

Implicit in the private academy movement is that the Confucian state as a depository of Confucian culture did not perform its ethico-religious function well. Indeed, national academies had deteriorated into places where young

9. The private academies with which Toegye was concerned are as follows: Paekundong academy, Yeongbong academy, Seoak academy, Yeokdong academy, Yisan academy, Imgo academy, Namgye academy. See Yi Wuk (1993: 39).

scholars prepared for the civil examination that ensured worldly benefits, rather than fulfilling their original educational roles. Ethics, propriety, and foremost learning for self-cultivation had disappeared.

Having looked closely at the national academies of these days, I find that both teachers and students lost their propriety. Not only are their own regulations of the school not abided by but also the laws of the state regulating the national academies are almost ignored. Nevertheless, both parties blame each other for the problems. Of course, the National Academy has problems but the Four Colleges are much more problematic. I hear that students of the Four Colleges see their teachers just like seeing passengers, and the school just like a lodging facility. Few students are dressed according to ritual in normal times. [...] Far from taking a class and asking questions, they lie down in the hall and look at teachers askance even without bowing to them. Asked of why [not dressed properly], they blantly answer, "I don't have the clothes" (TJ 437-438).

Toegye never overtly blamed the king for the educational crisis. It is undeniable, however, that from his perplexity we can easily infer his implicit criticism of the loss of the ethico-religious charisma of the king. This inference is more plausible when examining education's connection to the whole Confucian cultural framework. Education carried out not only a practical function of training governmental officials but, more importantly, a religious purpose of rearing virtuous men versed in the Confucian classics. Hence, the primary qualification to be an official was morality rather than practical skill.¹⁰

In *Moralpolitik*,¹¹ moral issues are easily transformed into political ones and vice versa. And it was typically true for Joseon politics. For instance, whenever critical moral issues were raised, students of Seonggyungwan never failed to criticize the moral corruption of the central government that, directly or indirect-

10. In particular, Mencius thought morality alone could be sufficient for political performance. The conversation between him and Gong-sun Chou typifies the Mencian idea of politics: "Has Yue-cheng Zu great strength of character?" "No." "Is he a man of thought and foresight? No. Is he widely informed?" "No." "Then why were you so happy that you could not sleep?" "He is a man who is drawn to the good." "Is that enough?" "To be drawn to the good is more than enough to cope with the Empire, let alone the state of Lu" (6B: 13).

11. The term *Moralpolitik* implies the fusion of religion and politics, that is, the fusion of religious and political authority or charisma. See Kim Sangjun (2000).

ly, had provoked such problems either by presenting collective memorials to kings or by withdrawing from the school. Here, at stake was the charismatic authority of the king, who *ought to* be the sole judge of all state affairs. It is in this context that the student demonstration was believed to be one of the most powerful moral admonitions to the king. Therefore, Toegye's lamentation at the disappearance of students' critical reasoning was directed at the failure of national education as a whole and, more fundamentally, the loss of the king's moral charismatic authority. For Toegye, King Jungjong's and King Myeongjong's corrupt government were the sources of all problems.

After the *ulsa sahwa* (1545), in particular, after 1549 when his elder brother Yi Hae was executed by clubbing as ordered by the government, Toegye, disillusioned by a bureaucratic life in government, began delving into educational activities, among which the private academy movement was at the center. Almost simultaneously, Toegye resigned the office of *Daesaseong* (the headmaster of Seonggyungwan) as soon as he was appointed in 1553. This chronological sequence provides a profound insight into the nature of Toegye's private academy movement: It can be construed as a moral criticism on both national education and politics of the center. It is natural then to ask whether Toegye's private academy movement was perfect moral therapy.

Originally, the private academy was the place where the study of Tao (*do-hak*) alone should be explored. The Confucian hero's noble ideal was thought to hold an absolute value in this sanctum. Not surprisingly, in principle it must be far from any worldly interest. However, a more troubling problem arises herein. As discussed, a heroic Confucian scholar attains charismatic quality through his *personal* experience of Heaven's mandate through Confucian learning. Zhu Xi (1130-1200), compiler of Neo-Confucianism, asserted that one would be awakened "with a sudden flash" of the cosmic law of Heaven if one eagerly investigates things and extends knowledge. If we understand what Mencius called the "flood-like ch'i" (*hoyeon jigi*) as the emanating power of the Confucian scholar's charisma, as Zhu Xi commented, it is attained *without any symptom of shape or sound.*" Therefore, charisma, in its pure form, is not a quality to be transmitted by institutional education (Weber 1968: 1114).

With regard to guarding the Confucian Way, therefore, constructing private academies as well could not be a perfect alternative for the corruption of national academies. A true Confucian scholar finds the Way in *oneself* and derives deep inner satisfaction from it (de Bary 1983: 22). The private academy at best could offer a milieu proper for that purpose. As an institution, that is, a routinized form

of individual scholarly charisma, the private academy still remained vulnerable to its entanglement with worldly interest. It is thus understandable that, for *Hungupa's* part, the private academy movement was no less than a *political* movement disguised as educational activity by which the *Sarim* regrouped and revived their political forces after the series of the literati purges. Although dismaying to *Sarimpa*, history vindicates this *Hungupa's* allegation. Indeed, private academies fulfilled a critical role as catalysts in making *Sarim* a cohesive political force (*Sarimpa*) through the father-son-like relationships between the teacher and his disciples (Jeong Manjo 1997: 157-209; Yi Taejin 1995: 175-209).

That shrines were usually adjunct to the private academies provides clear evidence of the sociological nature of the private academy. Shrines were often built out of followers' desire to perpetuate Confucian heroes' moral charisma such as Jo Gwang-jo and Kim Goeng-pil. Especially, around the issue of who was to be enshrined, private academies were often relegated into the battlefield where particular regions' interests competed and collided (Yi Wuk 1993: 80-87). Moreover, as *yangban* monopolized the interpretation of ritual proprieties in sacrificial rites, the social status with *yangban* at the peak became petrified, and the exclusive exercise of moral leadership of *yangban* elites (and by the same token the exclusion of non-*yangban* from any claims to it) was intensified.¹²

All the more ironic is that many private academies were granted a royal charter (*saaek*). Private academies sought official sanction from the state for getting economic support and, more profoundly, attaining orthodoxy. Although most orthodox Neo-Confucians abhorred the central politics and the governments of King Chungjoing and King Myeongjong, they could not deny the symbolic authority of the Confucian kingship. Irrespective of their personal qualities, kings were regarded as king-teacher (*gunsa*); otherwise, the very foundation of the Confucian political order would be undermined. Confucian scholars, unlike the medieval Western ecclesiastic classes, never attempted to construct their own ethico-religious institutions absolutely separate from secular politics.¹³ In reality, Confucian scholars, whose ultimate resort was to the lineage of the orthodox tao

12. See Jeong Sun-wu (1998: 46-53). As time went on, the struggles for social hegemony around sacrificial rites in private academies grew more heated, which finally instigated battles between rural villages (*hyangjeon*) in the late Joseon period.

13. The history of medieval Europe was the very opposite because Catholic priests built their own institution separate from the secular politics. See Thomas Aquinas' (1982) argument on two separate governments: divine and kingly.

(*do-tong*), were to be subservient to the king whose ultimate authority was undergirded by the sacred lineage of the kingship (*wang-tong*).

In short, private academies, too, just like national academies, were to be under state jurisdiction. Once an individual scholar's charisma was institutionalized, its entanglement with worldly interests became inevitable. At the same time, the Confucian scholar's moral charisma began to be transformed into political power. Therefore it is not surprising that Confucian scholars in rural areas formed a collective political identity and finally seized political power through the private academy movement.¹⁴ As private academies assumed political hegemony, the "lineage" of scholarship (*hak-tong*) began to override the individual scholar's moral charisma.

2. The Lineage of Kingship

The idea of a king and teacher (*gunsa*) is double-edged. If it is connected with the theory of the sage-king, it signifies an ideal Confucian monarchy. By contrast, if it is pursued simply to add to the religious charisma of a hereditary kingship, it can result in tyranny. As such, the idea of king-teacher may oscillate between the two extremes of moral politics¹⁵ and power politics. This is the paradox of *Moralpolitik*. The problem is that proper means to check tyranny could hardly be found when the latter route could be taken. It is for this reason that ancient Confucian scholars had to develop and refine rituals, particularly the family ritual (*jongbeop*), as an apparatus to limit autocracy. For Confucians, hitherto, the misinterpretation or distortion of the ritual implied the breakdown of Confucian politics.

As a matter of fact, however, the invention of the family ritual is the other side of the deterioration of Confucian politics. As the ancient history texts such as the *Sheng* of Jin, the *Tao U* of Chu and the *Spring and Autumn Annals* of Lu started being written when the traces of the sage-kings had disappeared

14. Toegye held a binary of 'we' and 'they' in the understanding of the *Sarim* and the *Hungu*, because in response letter to Nammyeong, who blamed Toegye for having approved younger *Sarim*'s entering the government without scrutiny of their morality, Toegye defended the morality of 'men in our side' (*TJ* 196). This implies that the lineage of the orthodox tao (*do-tong*) can be possessed collectively and, accordingly, the lineage of the scholarship would determine the individual Confucian scholar's moral charisma. For the Toegye's binary understanding of the political forces, see Son Mun-ho (1997).

15. "Moral politics" simply speaks of a benevolent politics.

(*Mencius* 4B: 21), so the family ritual was contrived only after the institutionalization of the kingship and hereditary transmission system being entrenched. The disappearance of the sage-kings' charismatic ruling drove Confucians, troubled about the violent political strife around royal succession, to invent a means by which to rationally check the arbitrary power of the later kings (*huwang*). It is for this reason that all details of the Confucian family ritual were originally developed in the royal families of the Shang and Chou dynasties (Yi Yeong-chun 1998: 33-34; Ji Du-hwan 1996: 15-16).

The sacred lineage of kingship based on family ritual is key to understanding Toegye's idea of the kingship and the king's charismatic authority. In the memorial of 1568 to King Seonjo (*Mujin Yukjosŏ*), Toegye wrote:

Just as there cannot be two suns in the sky, two kings for the people, or two fathers in the family, so there cannot be two untrimmed mourning dresses (*chamchoe*) in the funeral. Even if the ancient sages, too, appreciated the parental love of real parents who gave birth to sons, they established a law of adoption for the continuous transmission of the family by ritual. For a legal son, it is imperative to devote his filial piety to his new [legal] parents because the love of real parents is not so much as that of the new [legal] parents. This is why the ancient sages diminished the benefit of the real parents and, on the other, enriched that of [legal parents]. In this way, they established a principle of transmission (*TJ* 101).

Why, then, such an emphasis on the family ritual? King Seonjo, the incumbent king who had just succeeded to the throne, was not late King Myeongjong's own son. In fact, in Joseon history, King Seonjo was the first king who was neither a son nor a grandson of the king's legal wife (Yi Yeong-chun 1998: 96). As King Myeongjong died leaving no son to succeed him in 1567, Haseongun Gyun, the third son of Deokeunggun, who was a son of King Jungjong's concubine (*seoja*), was adopted as the late king's legal son and succeeded him to the throne. Although he was tacitly identified as the heir by King Myeongjong himself, there were no official steps taken regarding the ceremonial procedures until June 1567, when his enthronement was eventually made. Predictably, small disputes about the legitimacy question ensued. After the inauguration ceremony, however, these sorts of questions were never openly raised. First, his succession was in accordance with the prescription of the family ritual that a son of the branch line (*jija*) of the same family (*dongjong*) can be adopted as the legal

eldest son when no legitimate sons are found in the main line (*daejong*). Second, King Myeonjong's living wife, now King Seonjo's legal mother, affirmed that he had been unofficially identified as the heir by King Myeongjong. Third, there were no challenging competitors.

Toegye adamantly insisted on stringent observance of the family ritual, reminding King Seonjo of the importance of filial piety to legal parents rather than to real parents. Toegye found that the sacred *lineage* of the kingship over which the family ritual had a full jurisdiction should be the single greatest important source of the ruling legitimacy. For him, it was apparent that a principle of the family ritual that the legitimate lineage of the eldest son is to be preserved even by means of adoption was the most rational thinking to place the public mind of Heaven over the narrow private kinship relation.¹⁶ Moreover, it was also thought that adoption would be most suitable for the original principle of selecting a wise and virtuous man as king. This positive belief notwithstanding, it is indisputable that the eligibility for adoption was firmly restricted within the royal members of the sacred lineage of the kingship. Therefore, the royal family ritual was primarily an ethico-religious justification for the routinization of the king's charisma, although its "real" purpose was to rationally control the succession of the kingship by means of the Confucian ritual classics (*uiryeseo*).

For sure, Toegye exalted the sacred lineage of the kingship. But, at the same time, he diminished the actual charismatic authority of the incumbent king because the very "sacredness" of the kingship was exclusively under the Confucian scholars' authority of interpretation of the classics.¹⁷ In this formula, in spite of the symbolic exaltation of the kingship, the actual power of the king was to be limited. The king was understood as just a secular ruler, but no more as a king-teacher (*gunsa*). Simultaneously, the substantial power to rule was to be entrusted to the Confucian scholars, the real possessors of the Confucian Way until a king once again would become a sage-king.

16. For Confucians, ritual was understood as a representation of the Heavenly Way. See Ji Du-hwan (1996: 18).

17. Actually, such staggering interpretive power enabled Confucian scholars to determine who could/could not be included in a sacred lineage. The violent ritual controversies between the Seoin and the Namin in late eighteenth century were in fact the disputes around this delicate subject.

Nammyeong and Pure Scholarly Charisma

1. The Charismatic Confucian Scholar

In comparison with Toegye, it is surprising that Nammyeong never took part in the private academy movement. Nor did he leave any comment on Toegye's active involvement in it. Unfortunately, documents that could explain Nammyeong's nonchalance are scarcely found. True, it is widely known that Nammyeong made a reverence visit to the shrine of Namgye academy where Jeong Yeo-chang, one of the martyrs of the *gapja sahwá* (Purge of 1504), was enshrined. But that event at best reveals his personal respect for the heroic Confucian scholar. It does not provide any systemic ideas Nammyeong held on private academies and the private academy movement. For this reason, it is hardly possible to examine Nammyeong's idea on the Confucian scholar's charisma with reference to the private academy. Instead, his argument on the question of scholar's participation in real politics (*chulcheoron*) provides a profound insight into it.

When Nammyeong was appointed manager of immolation for the national sacrifice (*Jeonsaengseo Jubu*) in 1553, Toegye, headmaster of the National Academy (*Seonggyungwan Daesaseong*) at that time, wrote a letter to exhort Nammyeong, who had already rejected government offices several times, to take it. Toegye wrote:

In my humble judgment, to refuse the government office is tantamount to neglecting the bond between king and subject. Who can do away with this great moral bond? [It is said] the ancient scholars were, too, prudent in taking office because it was hardly possible to prepare civil examination without disturbing their [moral] minds, and to do a trivial job [albeit recommended] would not be honorable. Either case would tend to spoil a scholar's moral integrity. Your case is different, however. Since you have been recommended by Confucian scholars in rural areas, it would not be so disturbing as taking it through the civil examination, and since you are immediately be appointed to the sixth-grade office, it would not be so despicable as taking a trivial position (*TJ* 191).

At a first glance, Nammyeong's justification seems not so deviated from the conventional ritualistic formality. In his response, Nammyeong wrote:

How could possibly such a foolish man like me attempt to grudge myself? [It is because] my undeserved reputation has deluded the whole world that our Royal Highness has been misinformed. Stealing other man's property is called theft. Much more is it the case with stealing Heaven's possession (morality)! At a loss and in anxiety, I have long been waiting for Heaven's reprimand, and it indeed came to me. Since last winter, for over a month, I have had a stitch in my waist and back and suddenly I came to hobble on my right leg (*NJ* 133-134).

As the above lines indicate, Nammyeong was not pleased to take office when morality was at stake, although it would have been through the (rural) *Sarim*'s collective recommendation (*cheon-geo*), presumably the most ideal way by which to serve the government. However, behind the outward excuses like his lack of moral excellence and illness lay a more profound reason for his continuous refusals of the government office. In 1555, he once again resigned from the newly appointed magistrate position of Danseong province (*Danseong Hyeongam*). This time, he put forth a memorial to King Myeongjong for the reason, which stated:

[Your] corrupt government has undermined the root of the state, displaced the decree of Heaven, and caused the hearts of the people to be estranged from government. To use a metaphor, our state is just like a huge tree, eaten away by worms for a hundred years, now having no more sap left, and still not predicting or being prepared for an impending whirlwind and fierce storm. Your government has been stuck in such a situation for a long time. Certainly, there are still [some] faithful and devoted officials in court and assiduous scholars studying through the night all across the country. In spite of this extremely deplorable situation, however, officials in lower positions are indulged in dissipation and debauchery, whereas officials in higher positions are obsessed with extending their personal gain while swaggering in the court. None of them think seriously about how to rectify this dismaying situation. Our state is like a fish whose belly is decaying (*NJ* 243).

Here, it becomes apparent that the fundamental rationale of Nammyeong's continuous refusals was based on a principle addressed in the *Analects of Confucius*: When the Way is not prevailing, one must not serve the state

(*Analects* 15: 6).¹⁸ For Nammyeong, it was not only spoiling his moral integrity but, more importantly, blemishing the Way to enter government in times when the state was not under the Way. This intransigence reminds us of Po Yi, an ancient sage, who regarded “keeping one’s integrity intact” as the principal manifestation of the scholar’s charisma. Nammyeong’s stringent standard on the political participation is well represented in his evaluation of the Neo-Confucian scholars martyred in the literati purges of the previous generation. As far as the question of political participation goes, he thought venerated heroes like Kim Geong-pil and Jo Gwang-jo lacked prescience (*NJ* 147). His criticism even continued to Jeong Mong-ju, the emblematic figure in the matter of moral integrity. Because of this sternness, Nammyeong was often misjudged as if he prohibited scholarly involvement in politics wholesale (Kim Yun-je 1991: 194). To be sure, this allegation tells part of the truth. For Nammyeong spoke highly only of Gil Jae among Korean Confucians, who had never compromised his moral integrity with bureaucratic life. In light of his own standard, the political actions of two great contemporary Neo-Confucians, Yi Eon-jeok (1491-1553)¹⁹ and Toegye, were deemed as digressing far from Confucian principles. Toegye’s criticism of him being a Taoist notwithstanding,²⁰ Nammyeong never turned away from state affairs. Although he criticized the immature political judgment of Kim Geong-pil and Jo Gwang-jo, he admired their indomitable spirits and believed them worthy to be remembered forever, given their sacrifices for the ideal. Like Mencius, Nammyeong believed that a Confucian scholar faces a choice between two paths: exclusively devoting his life to the Way, or completely refraining from government. Between the two extremes, there was no room for Yi Eon-jeok and Toegye who had stepped into the deplorable governments of King Jungjong and King Myeongjong.

In fact, Toegye blamed Nammyeong’s refusal to take offices on the basis of the principle of the “inseparable bond between king and subject,” a principle that justifies a scholar’s political participation regardless of political circumstances,

18. At the time, the government was under Yun Won-hyeong’s sway, who came to power after the *ulsa sahw*a (the purge of 1545).

19. During the *ulsa sahw*a, Yi Eon-jeok was in charge of the interrogation of the *Sarim* who were arrested. Even if he endeavored to lessen the unfair sacrifices of the scholars, Nammyeong and Yulgok, on the basis of the Confucian principle, criticized his participation in the unjust government.

20. Toegye once attributed this harsh standard of political participation to Nammyeong’s Taoist inclination.

say, even when the Way is not prevailing. The question that ensues is where should priority be placed between “when the Way does not prevail, one must not serve the state” (*bang mudo jeuk bulsa*) or “the king is the lord of the subjects” (*gunwishingang*)? What could offer a breakthrough for this contradiction latent in Confucianism? Nammyeong’s essay on Yen Guang²¹ provides a useful clue to his stance.

In Guang Wu 27 (A.D. 51), Yen Guang was appointed Chief Censor, but he never departed from his principle and finished his life at Fu-chun Mountain, fishing. I believe Eom was the one who truly sought for the Way of the ancient sages. Why is it so? Once upon a time, Mencius, declining to see feudal lords, said, “‘Bend the foot in order to straighten the yard’ refers to profit. If it is for profit, I suppose one might just as well bend the yard to straighten the foot.” Therefore, there were Confucian scholars who never served the Emperor above and never became a subject of feudal lords below. Although being offered a state, they were never pleased by it, regarding it as a trivial thing. Entertaining sublime ambition and possessing great ability, they could hardly easily permit themselves to others. Just as those who have a skill to kill a dragon do not step into a kitchen to prepare for sacrifice offerings, so those who could assist a rule of sagacity (*wangdo jeongchi*) do not enter a state in which a rule of utilitarianism (*paedo jongchi*) prevails (NJ 258-259).

Referring to Mencius, Nammyeong was convinced that the latter, one of the three cardinal human bonds (*samgang*), was essentially a tradition invented by imperial Confucians. It was Nammyeong’s conviction that a tradition in contradiction with the original spirit of the ideal was not to be valued in absolute terms. Drawing on Mencian tension between the king and the Confucian scholar, he implied that the bond between the king and the subject was firmly established as tradition after the *politicization* of Confucianism as the state ideology in imperial dynasties. It was thought that if the tradition of later times had petrified and fur-

21. Yen Guang was a bosom friend from childhood of Emperor Guang Wu (r. 25-55), the founder of the Late Han dynasty. Watching his friend become an Emperor, Yen Guang changed his name and disappeared. Twenty seven years later, when the Emperor Guang Wu found him and tried to appoint him Chief Censor, Yen Guang, declining it, lived in retirement at Fu-chun Mountain.

ther distorted the original spirit of the ancient sages, who originated the principle, it should not be rigorously followed. Put differently, Nammyeong claimed that the Confucian scholar's pure charisma transcended the traditionalized bond between the king and the subject.

What then was Mencius' principle of entering government? In his famous analogy of the "drowning sister-in-law," Mencius contended that saving a waning kingdom would be qualitatively different from saving a drowning sister-in-law out of water, although the latter could be admitted as an expedient measure (*gwon*) in urgency. Yet, it is the Way, not the hand, which would be needed to save a kingdom. If the Way were to be bent for saving a kingdom, it would be no different than utilitarianism (*paedo*). Mencius abhorred regularly employing an expedient measure that would merely hold temporal efficiency in governing political affairs, especially, in justifying originally inappropriate political participation, reproaching it as essentially a crooked rationale that was often used to disguise the cruelty of power in moral outfit. In the same venue, in the last lines of the essay on Yen Guang, Nammyeong, comparing him with Yen, praised the ancient sage-minister Yi Yin for not pursuing government office and bending the Way (*NJ* 260).

In fact, according to Zhu Xi, the original relationship between the king and the subject was based upon righteousness (*ui*), to which timely judgment is central. Hence, the subservience of a subject, originally a virtuous Confucian scholar, to the king could not command absolute value but rather would depend on the peculiarity of the situation and personal moral judgment. It is interesting that Toegye was also troubled by the same problem. In a letter to Ki Dae-seung, he once lamented that it had become almost impossible to resign from office in light of one's own scholarly moral judgment, given Joseon's political reality in which the original principle governing the relationship between king and subject had long been diluted (*TJ*, 256). Nammyeong thought Toegye inappropriately attempted to compromise the scholar's moral charisma with political reality.

Nammyeong was firmly convinced that those who could not maintain the purest form of moral integrity should not put themselves into politics because they were likely to be overridden by political interest. It was deemed that once the lofty Confucian learning (*do-hak*) descends to this world and interacts with politics, its politicization and secularization would be inevitable. The secularization of Confucian learning results in it being turned into a resource for worldly interests, not practiced for one's moral cultivation. Nammyeong's critical thinking was directed at the *Sarim* who passed (or would pass) the civil examination

by means of Confucian learning and, being deeply entrenched in bureaucracy, built (or would build) wealth, reputation, and social status. He admonished the *Sarim* scholars not to plunge into the political world unless they were soaked in morality. Familial and academic ties that were widely believed to constitute the very socio-political identity of *Sarim* could not be an immaculate guarantee of morality. When Oh Geon (1521-1574), one of his disciples, took office, Nammyeong wrote to him:

Particularly, I would like to advise you about the Way of political participation because the other day I found you swallowed food through the gullet, not through the backbone (*NJ* 146).

By utilizing a metaphor of the way of having a meal, Nammyeong implicitly blamed Oh Geon for being driven by desire, not by morality. Here Nammyeong believed ideal interests sharply confronted material interests. Nammyeong's understanding of the tension between ideal and material interests clearly contrasts with Toegye's, whose philosophy reduces the tension to that of a battle of two minds: a moral mind (*do-shim*) and a human mind (*in-shim*) (Yi Gwang-ho 1982: 53; Park Chung-seok 1982: 31-39). Nammyeong construed the struggle of the inner minds as an actual life question. He claimed that moral charisma could not be acquired by the static contemplation of Heavenly principle (*li*) but rather by the conquest of desire in actual social/political life. The tension would be felt strongly and even tragically because the two distinctive interests could never possibly be reconciled in reality. However, this was possible within the mind-and-heart according to Toegye's philosophy. In fact, Nammyeong shed new light on the concept of righteousness (*ui*), traditionally understood as one of the four cardinal moral principles (*sadeok*) intrinsic in human nature. He compared it to a sentry who guards the moral mind against the human mind (*NJ* 121-130). Righteousness should be thus an action that constantly pursues ideal interests. In Nammyeong's philosophy, righteousness was a *posteri* virtue. Moral charisma would be acquired by overcoming worldly temptation permeating one's flesh and blood. Hence, Nammyeong's ideal man was a *cheosa*, a retired Confucian scholar in a rural area.

In a poem for his nephew who had just decided to take civil examination to support his family, Nammyeong confessed how tragic reality was for the Confucian scholars who wished to hold moral charisma, which could hardly maintain its purity in bureaucracy.

No other purposes for office
 Than for [impoverished] mother and younger brother
 On the *Yangju* road
 So hesitating you are (*NJ* 41).

“The *Yangju* road” is the crossroad that every Confucian scholar should confront. At the crossroads, Nammyeong believed, the Confucian scholar should decide which way to go, the way of the scholar or the way of the bureaucrat. It would be a tragic decision because for Nammyeong the two roads were not compatible with each other. Nammyeong appears even more “radical” than Mencius, the first theorist on the Confucian scholar’s charisma, because Mencius found it inevitable to enter government in order to perform ancestor sacrifices (3B: 3) or to avoid severe poverty (5B: 5, 6B: 14).

In his advocacy of the pure form of scholar’s moral charisma, Nammyeong never believed that it could be acquired collectively. Contrasted with Toegye, who attempted to routinize and further institutionalize the scholar’s charisma by adhering to the binary of “we, *Sarim*” and “they, *Hungu*,” Nammyeong insisted on returning to the original individuality of moral charisma, refusing to adopt the very “we” concept.

To watch today’s young scholars, they, even not knowing the appropriate way of sprinkling [the street with water] and sweeping, attempt to steal a vain reputation and delude others, only speaking of [such a lofty topic as] the Heavenly principle with their mouths. Yet, [when those are in government,] they rather often do harm to others and its aftermath affects more people. It is probably because an influential elder like you (Toegye) have not scolded them not to do so (*NJ* 135).

It was thought as far more serious derogation that those who deemed themselves as moralists secularly exploited morality in justifying their own political interests. Immanuel Kant spoke of this paradox:

I can indeed imagine a *moral politician*, i.e. someone who conceives of the principles of political expediency in such a way that they can co-exist with morality, but I cannot imagine a *political moralist*, i.e. one who fashions his morality to suit his own advantage as a statesman (Kant 1992: 118).

Drawing on Kant, I argue that Toegye regarded *Sarim* scholars, despite their moral fragility, as “moral politicians.” In this regard, he definitely inherited the dichotomy of “*Hungu* (corrupt) vs. *Sarim* (moral),” a binary that had been developed during the series of the literati purges. In contrast, Nammyeong warned the individual *Sarim* scholar of being derogated into a “political moralist.” As a matter of fact, the tension between the moral politician and the political moralist had not intensified during the literati purges. Whereas the literati purges were triggered by the antagonism between the relatively differentiated political groups, the conflict between Toegye and Nammyeong represented the split of the orthodox Neo-Confucians (*Sarim* group) when the Neo-Confucian orthodoxy was being established. In his dispute with Toegye, Nammyeong’s concern moved to the question of the ruling legitimacy of the Confucian scholars, that is, the question of their moral charismatic authority.

2. The Restoration of King’s Charisma

Nammyeong’s memorial to the king in 1555 (*Ulmyo Sajikso*), written to justify why he *must* refuse the magistrate position of Danseong province, evoked a commotion across the whole country. In addition to his general criticism of King Myeongjong’s government, two particular expressions he employed were at the center of the issue. In the memorial, he belittled Queen Munjeong as a “widow in a deep palace,” and King Myeongjong as “nothing more than a late king’s son” (*NJ* 243). At first sight, these blasphemous expressions seem to show that Nammyeong deprecated the king’s authority more than Toegye who emphasized on the sacred lineage of the kingship. But, ironically, Nammyeong’s blasphemy centered on the weak kingship in actuality and, more importantly, on the sacred lineage of the kingship that exalted the king’s *symbolic* authority while controlling its *real* power. That is, Nammyeong derided King Myeongjong as just a “late king’s son” because he lacked the *personal* charisma as a ruler. By describing King Myeongjong as such, Nammyeong demythologized the sacredness of the lineage of the kingship.

Nammyeong demanded the substantial king’s charismatic authority that would transcend the lineage charisma. The issue was not whether the succession of the kingship was legitimate in light of ritual but whether the king timely executed his power in full authority in every particular political situation. In the memorial of 1568 (*Mujin Bongsa*), the very year when Toegye also presented his own (*Mujin Yukjoso*), Nammyeong gave some advice to the recently inaugu-

rated King Seonjo.

Your Royal Highness, please burst into indignation and show the anger of Heaven. And then press hard the Councilors for the solution on the current political turmoil. If you resolutely wield your power just like [the legendary sage-king] Shun who executed the Four Villains, and Confucius who beheaded [wicked] Shao, you shall be able to show the people how extremely you hate evil. Then, they will surely be afraid of you from the bottom of their heart. [...] If you show moral virtue and royal dignity, even the grass and trees will be subjugated. Much more is it the case with human beings! If you do so, all your subjects will be hectic in receiving your royal command, trembling with fear. How dare villains conspire an evil plot [even in their minds]? (NJ 253-254)

Nammyeong seems here to have asked King Seonjo to adopt the Legalist way of ruling. On contrary to the Legalists (*Beopga*) who excluded moral concerns from politics, however, Nammyeong stressed both moral virtue (*deok*) and royal dignity (*wieom*). In fact, Nammyeong asserted that King Seonjo should restore the double-edged charismatic authority of the ancient sage-kings, that is, the authority as king-teacher (*gunsa*) holding both ethico-religious charisma (*mun*) and military charisma (*mu*). In contrast with Toegye, who exclusively emphasized the single greatest significance of the moral virtue and therewith the sage learning (*seong-hak*), Nammyeong paid more attention to royal dignity in political affairs because he believed that sage learning centering on the moral cultivation of one's inner-self would be prone to fix the objective reality of the outer-world (Park Chung-seok 1998: 13-14). Central to Nammyeong's thought was that the ruler, who should deal with a particular political problem in a particular time, could make timely political judgment. He was convinced that deep indulgence in sage learning and the meticulous observation of ritual could sometimes be a critical impediment to making timely political judgment on a particular issue. The *waegu* (the Japanese pirates) problem was a case in point. This case clearly showed the apparent contrast between Toegye and Nammyeong in their understandings of the nature and latitude of the king's power. In the memorial of 1544 (*Kapjin Geolmuljeolwaesaso*), Toegye strongly advised King Myeongjong not to decline the Japanese delegation's apology for the Saryang incident and urged him to find a peaceful settlement.

The Saryang incident incurred by the island barbarians (*waegu*) was nothing but a theft of those like dogs and rats. Since a throng of those thieves were either killed or won away and those who provided lodging for them were also expelled from the country, our national dignity has already been wielded and the kingly law has also been fully exercised. Now they·····,·····from their part, voluntarily came to the great country (Joseon) to beg pity and forgiveness, explaining of what happened and wagging their tails. Then, it would be benevolent sagacity not to jump at to the conclusion that they attempt to deceive us. If [they] are truly sincere, [you] only have to accept them. What the barbarians are now asking seems to me permissible, but [you] do not permit it. I have no clue of when then [you] finally will permit it (*TJ* 67).

Here, Toegye argues that the king should trust the sincerity in the enemy's apology, without casting doubt to the truthfulness of it. To do otherwise would reveal the King's lack of benevolence and his deviation from the way of sage-rule (*wangdo*). Toegye's idealism that preferred peace negotiations is sharply contrasted to Nammyeong's realism. In the memorial of 1555 (*Ulmyo Sajikso*), Nammyeong urged King Myeongjong to take drastic military actions against the *waegu*:

Once again, the *waegu* from Tsushima, who had conspired with the [Korean] guides, ruined our country. Nevertheless, however, the charismatic royal dignity has never been wielded. It is just like the Song dynasty's case that teaches us that excessive benevolence to the enemy, comparable with that of the [ancient] Zhou dynasty, could rather result in disaster over the country. Please recall King Sejong's expedition of the southern barbarian and King Seongjong's expedition of the northern barbarian. There has been nothing like today['s irresolution] (*NJ* 244-245).

It was said that, in the Warring States period, King Liang of Song was killed and ruined his own country in the war with Chou because he had been continuously postponing the attack, saying that a virtuous man (*gunja*) should not attack the enemy under disarray. Nammyeong was sure that blind benevolence without timely judgment was the cause of the incredible disaster. For Nammyeong, the realist approach would be the best method to deal with such enduring foreign affairs as the *waegu* problem. Nammyeong believed that in order to retrieve full

authority as king-teacher (*gunsu*), the king should be able to sharply distinguish right from wrong, good from evil as the legendary sage-kings did. Accordingly, he placed more stress on the discretion of the individual king. In Nammyeong's perspective, the king could not remain a symbolic ruler who retained power only in his *potential* sagehood, but must be an actual executioner dealing with a particular issue in a particular place at a particular time.²²

Conclusion

In Confucian countries like China and Korea, where civilian rule (*munchi*) had arrived in the early stage of history, the rulers were conceived as king-teachers (*gunsu*), endowed with both war and religious charisma (Weber 1964, 31). But, with the birth of the state, the king's charisma became routinized and transmitted through blood lineage. The family ritual was then invented primarily to rationally control the transmission of the kingship and, above all, the discretionary power of the king. The exaltation of the *lineage* of the sacred kingship, however, has transferred the king's religious charisma to the Confucian scholars because the worldly interests the king had to pursue were not in principle compatible with his pure moral charisma.

The separation of the lineage of kingship (*wang-tong*) and the lineage of the orthodox tao (*do-tong*) shaped the Confucian way of "two swords," and created a violent tension between the king (*kun*) and the subjects (*shin*). The literati purges during mid Joseon Korea were the emblematic case that dramatized the clash between the two swords. However, when the orthodox Confucians (*Sarim*) came to power in central government, another problem arose: Whether the *lineage* of the tao (*do-tong*) and the scholarship (*hak-tong*) could be a source of the legitimacy by which to judge the *individual* Confucian scholar's moral charisma. This question caused the two leading Korean Neo-Confucian scholars to part company in their political ideas. Toegye found it inevitable to form lineages of the tao, of the school, and of the kingship. In his attempt to transform Joseon society to an authentic Confucian society, the idea of lineage provided him with a language by which to conceptualize social reality in terms of the Confucian ritual.²³ The moralization of politics was believed to ensure the successful social

22. According to Isaiah Berlin (1996: 44-45), the perception of particularity is a core of the sense of reality.

construction of Confucian reality. Toegye saw no other way than the traditionalization of Confucianism in perpetuating the Confucian ideal.

Nammyeong found in the social construction of Confucian reality a critical moral problem: The routinization of the individual Confucian scholar's moral charisma. He noticed that in the ideationally constructed Confucian reality Confucian scholars would turn into mere bureaucratic functionaries and the king into a mere symbolic figurehead, deprived of actual political power. For Nammyeong, this appeared to put the cart before the horse. Instead of inventing lineage, Nammyeong adhered to the central value of an individual scholar's moral virtue and believed that constant reproduction of the originality of the personal charisma alone could guarantee the perpetuation of the Confucian ideal.

The conflict between Toegye and Nammyeong thus goes beyond the scope of a personal dispute between two prominent Neo-Confucian scholars. In fact, examination of this conflict provides a profound insight into the nature of the Confucian politics that has heretofore neglected. Contrary to conventional understanding, Confucianism was neither a political machine of the ruler nor a mere obstacle of real politics. As we have seen, Toegye's exaltation of the kingship could, in turn, imply the scholars' control of the king's arbitrary power by ritual. This would lead to a separation between actual political power and symbolic political authority. By the same token, Nammyeong's emphasis on pure scholarly charisma (or militant self-cultivation) could connect to the exaltation of the king's authority. But, on the other, pure scholarly charisma would exert a much stronger moralistic check on politics. This complicated nature of the Confucian politics indeed challenges Max Weber's insightful discussion of bureaucrats and politicians (Weber 1958) because, in the Confucian context, bureaucrats rather than party leaders were under strong moral pressure to exert charismatic leadership. Bureaucracy itself resisted its machinization. Toegye followed the traditional way of preventing bureaucracy from deteriorating to a machine by striving to institutionalize the various apparatuses as a powerful means to check the kingship. By contrast, Nammyeong endeavored to prevent its machinization by opposing the very institutionalization of bureaucracy. They differed radically in their prescriptions for the same problem. But, in fact, their conflict powerfully represented the double-edged nature of Confucian politics.

23. For the theoretical argument of the social construction of reality, see Berger and Luckmann (1966).

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