

“Nationalistic” Acceptance of Sasang Medicine

Shin Dongwon

Sasang Medicine (four constitutional medicine) of Yi Je-ma (1838-1900) has accomplished incomparable success in modern Korea since his book *Dongui susebowon* (An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean) was published in 1901. This rapid success was unprecedented in the history of Korean medicine. This paper is interested in the reason for this success. The hypothesis of this paper is that “besides pure clinical effectiveness, the Korean nationalistic mood toward its own culture during the Japanese colonial occupation period (1910-1945) contributed to *Sasang* Medicine gaining a great reputation.” This was because certain important theories completely different from previous traditional East Asian medicine became very attractive to cultural nationalists. Two important creative conceptions gave them a strong impression: First, it suggested that the body had four viscera and four entrails, denying the five viscera and six entrails that hitherto comprised the most important features of traditional East Asian medicine. Second, it emphasized a patient’s constitution rather than the numerous symptoms of each patient’s disease that traditional East Asian medicine had relied upon for several thousand years. Some traditional medical scholars and cultural nationalists believed that these two features of *Sasang* Medicine would make traditional medicine overcome not only traditional Chinese medicine but also Western medicine. Despite the slow spread of *Sasang* Medicine and its small scale in the traditional medical community, famous newspapers, journals, and popular books as well as some medical journals of traditional medicine dealt with the medicine as being representative of recent Korean accomplishments. As a result, the word, “*Sasang* Medicine” became familiar to common Koreans from between the middle of the 1930s to the middle of the 1940s.

Keywords: Yi Je-ma, *Sasang* Medicine, *Dongui susebowon*, nationalism

Introduction

Minjok munhwa daebaekwasajeon (Encyclopedia of Korean Culture) published by The Academy of Korean Studies defines *Sasang* Medicine (four constitutional medicine) as medicine that “divides people into four types according to their constitutional characteristics: a greater *yang* person, a greater *yin* person, a lesser *yang* person, and a lesser *yin* person. This is a unique way for Korean constitutional medicine to diagnose and cure disease.” According to *Donguihak sajeon* (Dictionary of Traditional Korean Medicine) published by North Korea in 1988, *Sasang* Medicine is defined as “our own unique constitutional medicine that divides people into four types, diagnoses, and cures their diseases according to the constitutional characteristics.” Thus, South and North Korea together call Yi Je-ma’s medicine as *Sasang* Medicine and define it as a unique Korean medical system based on a person’s physical constitution.

Yi Je-ma did not call his medicine *Sasang* Medicine. Nor did he define it as constitutional medicine. He only divided the types of people he had observed into four categories and called them the four constitutional types of human beings: a greater *yang* person, a greater *yin* person, a lesser *yang* person and a lesser *yin* person. He did not exaggerate to express his medical system but only used the expression “*dongui*” (Eastern doctor) to reveal that his medicine was different from the medical system of China and succeeded the medical tradition of Korea. However, Yi Je-ma’s medicine as expressed in *Dongui susebowon* (An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean) was neither different from previous medicine nor an extraordinary idea, nor is it a collection of past experiences. It assumed the appearance of arranging physiology, pathology, psychology, and pharmacology into four constitutional concepts. At a glance, it took on the form of an integral medical system worthy of being compared with the existing *wuxing* (five phases) medical system. These general characteristics are well defined in *Jouihak* (Korean Medicine in China, 1991). This book defines that “on the basis of Korean unique culture and traditional medicine, it absorbed the theory of Chinese medicine, united it into the practice Koreans had used to prevent and cure diseases, took the holism of ‘heaven,’ ‘human being,’ ‘human nature,’ and ‘life’ as guides to the theory, and regarded as important the ‘four ropes and four symbols’ and ‘determining treatment by identifying patterns.’ It has been gradually formed as a unique traditional medicine.” Thus, as Yi Je-ma’s medicine was general, systematic, and unprecedented, junior scholars named it *Sasang* Medicine, focusing on its form and as constitu-

tional medicine focusing on the most important medical characteristics, the four constitutional types of human being. In Yanbian, China, it was named “Korean medicine in China” so that it could be distinguished from traditional Chinese medicine.

I am interested in its “uniqueness” rather than the analysis of the contents of the medical system. I am particularly interested in the process in which a creative medical system formed and took root as a unique medical system to represent a nation. That is, this article is not really concerned with the clinical or philosophical content of *Sasang* Medicine, but rather in Yi Je-ma’s own unique self-consciousness as expressed when he proposed this medicine, and also in the reason why junior scholars later eagerly accepted this medicine. In other words, this article aims at revealing that the name of *Sasang* Medicine, or physical constitutional medicine, was a historical result and how ideology outside medicine worked on its formation. The reason I was interested in not the inside of medicine but the outside ideology was that I discovered that there was a great gap between the clinical field and the cultural and academic field when reviewing almost all of the literature concerning *Sasang* Medicine in the former half of the 20th century. That is, the clinical field of Korean medicine welcomed *Sasang* Medicine on a large scale but did not accept it; on the contrary, the cultural and academic spheres regarded *Sasang* Medicine very quickly and whole-heartedly as a Korean cultural and academic tradition of an age and beyond. Accordingly, I shall survey how it was accepted in the field of Korean medicine to take root in the general cultural and academic fields after Yi Je-ma proposed the four constitutional types of human being.

Yi Je-ma’s Declaration to Succeed the Tradition of Eastern Medicine

Only two books used the word “*dongui*” (Eastern doctor) in Korean medical books until the turn of the 20th century: *Exemplar of Korean Medicine* and *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*, the former written by Heo Jun and published in 1613 and the latter by Yi Je-ma and published in 1901. During the 300-year period between the publication of these two books, many medical books were published but none contained the words “Eastern doctor.” Therefore, the fact that Yi Je-ma used the term “Eastern doctor” in his book can attract historical attention. Why did he choose this term?

Unfortunately, Yi Je-ma left no explanation concerning the use of the term “Eastern doctor.” In *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*, there was no preface that told of the motive for writing the book. It may be that his writings assumed a kind of posthumous notion. Around the year of 1894, Yi Je-ma completed the whole outline of his medical system, arranged it in the form of a manuscript, and kept on amending the contents afterwards. Meanwhile, he unexpectedly passed away in 1900 and his followers published his works after his death.

Moreover, he might not even have used the term “Eastern doctor” himself. In the text of *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* in Yi Je-ma’s own writing, there are two parts that reveal the name of his book, *Susebowon* (Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin). First of all, in “The Origin of Medicine,” the second volume of *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*, he made it clear that the name of his book was “Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin,” where he wrote, “I have written a book and named it “Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin.” The reason he chose “Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin” appears in the last part of the book. Here, he made it clear that he used this title to signify that “If everyone knows medicine and the causes of diseases according to the contents, he will live a long and healthy life.” Thus, Kim Yong-ok has already pointed out that the word “Eastern doctor” could not be found in the text. He suggested the possibility that in the process of first revision, Yi Je-ma thought it necessary to use the word “Eastern doctor” or that in editing the book junior scholars added it (Han Yeong-mok 1994: 56).

The existence of an old copy of the work recently found at Hamsan Sachon supports the fact that the title of *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* was chosen by Yi Je-ma. This edition was made in 1940, and it was comparable with a later revised first edition and a printed edition centering on the contents of Yi Je-ma’s edition of 1895. And the 1940 edition also contains the original form of *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* of 1894 (An Sang-wu 2001: 7). This copy contains even the contents revised or deleted afterwards. On the cover, the inner page, the contents, and the title of chapter in the text, *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* was inscribed as follows: “Dongui susebowon seongmyeongnon gwonji 1” (Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin by an Eastern Doctor, Book One: Discussions on Human Nature and Life) and “Dongui susebowon soeuminnon

gwonji 2” (Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin by an Eastern Doctor, Book Two: Discussions on the Lesser *Yin* Person). The way of writing the title of the book differs a little between the two editions of Sinchuk and Gyeongja. In a printed edition, like “Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin by an Eastern Doctor, Book One: Discussions on Human Nature and Life” and “Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin by an Eastern Doctor, Book Two: Discussions on the Lesser *Yin* Person,” the order of the number of chapters and discussions is reversed. This discrepancy indicates that the expression of “Eastern doctor” inscribed in the title of the chapter of an edition of 1895 was not attached automatically according to the later revised first or printed editions. That is, around 1894, Yi Je-ma had thought he would name his book *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*, and this supports that the name was consistently used in a revised first edition in 1901 and in a printed edition published by junior scholars in 1904.

When choosing the title of his medical book, Yi Je-ma seemed to have preferred words implying the genuine spirit of medicine to those exaggerating his creativity. His choice of “Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin” had been already used by Gong Ting Xian, a medical man during the Ming dynasty in early 17th century. Gong Ting Xian, whom Yi Je-ma had highly praised in “Uiwonnon” (Discussions on the Origin of Medicine), was the son of Gong Xin. Both the father and the son were good at medicine. “Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin” implies the genuine spirit of medicine and academic succession to previous learning but did not reveal the uniqueness of Yi Je-ma’s medicine. Later on, his junior scholars named Yi Je-ma’s medicine as *Sasang* Medicine, an unfamiliar medical name, but Yi Je-ma did not go so far. He just attached the word “Eastern doctor.”

The choice of “Eastern doctor” could not be seen only as a passive standpoint different from the previous *Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin*. As was shown above, it was the first use after Exemplar of Korean Medicine because “Eastern doctor” was not necessarily attached to medical books written by Koreans. When Heo Jun used the term “Eastern doctor” in his *Exemplar of Korean Medicine*, he compared the medical tradition of Joseon and his standard of medicine with both traditions of Southern Doctor and Northern Doctor of China. It was a real bold attempt. Yi Je-ma had a pride in his creative medicine as much as Heo Jun, or more. Although Yi Je-ma revealed the use of and desire for the use of the term “Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin” in his book, he did not reveal the use of “Eastern doctor” on purpose. However, Yi Je-ma

prided himself on his medicine having explored a new horizon beyond the previous medical tradition. He said as follows:

Even though this book was written by a person of today, it is an unprecedented book never found in any long-lasting medical family. Because this book assumes right and wrong of all ages and decides the central points of medicine, even a misused word would be a fatal mistake of the reckless writer. (An Sang-wu 2001: 50)

This writing cannot be found in a later printed edition, but can be found only in an old edition of 1895. Although this remark in the original manuscript was deleted in the printed book later, it reveals Yi Je-ma's state of mind very well when he finished *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*. Heo Jun mentioned "Eastern doctor" in comparison with Southern and Northern Doctors of China; moreover, Yi Je-ma was proud that his creative medicine would be a real revelation in both Chinese and Korean medical traditions. Who had done it? It was a Korean, Yi Je-ma, who had done it. Yi Je-ma said in his "Discussions on the Origin of Medicine" in *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*: "I have experienced medicine during my whole life, I have understood accidentally the human nature and principle of four constitutional types of human beings due to the writings of previous scholars in the five thousand long medical history, and then wrote *Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin*."

Yi Je-ma of the Joseon dynasty succeeded the medicine of a Joseon man, Heo Jun, and recognized it as the succession to the proper function of medical tradition combining China and Joseon. This recognition of Yi Je-ma in medical history is well shown in "Discussions on the Origin of Medicine" in *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*. He recognized that the medical tradition began in the Gojong period of the Shang dynasty and that through the periods of Sinnong and the emperors, the development of medical duties began with Jang Jung Gyeong during the Han Dynasty. He also recognized that afterwards through Zhu Hong of the Sung Dynasty and Li Gao, Wang Hao Gu, Zhu Zhen Heng, and Wi Yeok Nim in the Yuan Dynasty, this tradition continued to Li Chuan and Gong Xin in the Ming Dynasty, and that Heo Jun wrote *Exemplar of Korean Medicine*, completed medical duties, and led the revival of medical duties. Yi Je-ma said indirectly in "Soyanginnon" (Discussions on a Lesser *Yang* Person), an old edition of 1895, that his four con-

stitutional types of human beings were accomplished through the study of the complete edition of medicine, *Exemplar of Korean Medicine*. He said that “due to Heo Jun’s *Exemplar of Korean Medicine* summarizing and rearranging ‘Discussions on Damage from the Cold’ by Zhang Zheng Jing and the medical points of various masters, he could master it and, adding some doubtful and difficult parts, discussing pathology of damage from the cold, seasonal *qui* and exterior and interior of greater, lesser, *yin*, and *yang* constitutional types of human beings” (An Sang-wu 2001: 6). Yi Je-ma thought that Heo Jun’s *Exemplar of Korean Medicine* was a masterpiece grasping the main points of traditional Korean and Chinese medicine up to Heo Jun’s lifetime and that he developed a step more and created a new medicine of his own. Thus, Yi Je-ma’s *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* could be said to succeed Heo Jun’s *Exemplar of Korean Medicine* in that they were the same Koreans and Yi Je-ma’s medicine was based on that of Heo Jun.

However, an Eastern doctor was not limited to regional characteristics but succeeded to the legitimacy of a long medical tradition and aimed at medical universality. Accordingly, Han Gyo-yeon who wrote the preface when publishing *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* in 1914 warned of a narrow-minded recognition for Yi Je-ma’s medicine, saying that “the readers of this book must not misunderstand that this book is confined only to the medicine of the Eastern kingdom (Joseon) and that Yi Je-ma is a famous doctor who cures diseases very well in the Eastern kingdom. When investigating the general principles of medicine in this book, one can realize the kingdom of heavens lies not so far away.”

From the Four Constitutional Types of Human Beings to Four Constitutional Medicine

Before *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* was published in 1901, a variety of disciples and literary men had already learned Yi Je-ma’s medicine and formed sects. After Yi Je-ma died, his literary men combined the first edition of 1894 and the revised first edition of 1900 of Yi Je-ma’s *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* and published them in a printed edition in 1901. In the end of this printed edition, it is written that Yuldonggye (a mutual aid association at Yuldong) in Hamheung had published this book. The seven associates were lit-

erary men: Kim Yeong-gwan, Han Jik-yeon, Song Hyeon-su, Han Chang-yeon, Choe Gyeom-yong, Wi Jun-hyeok, and Yi Seop-won. Not less than seven members at Hamheung had studied under Yi Je-ma and revealed Yi Je-ma's medicine to the world by publishing *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* in a printed edition. Later on, Choe Myeon-gap, Ko Gyeong-pil, Kim Jung-seo, and Yi Jeung-mo published the second edition of *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* in 1911. The third edition came out in 1913, and in 1914 the most popular fourth edition with Han Gyeo-yeon's preface came out in Seoul. In 1921 the fifth edition, identical with the fourth, came out, and in 1936 the sixth edition came out in Beijing. In 1941, Bowon associates such as Han Byeong-mu, Han Du-jeong, Han Min-seon, and Hong Sun-yong, including Yi Jin-yun, a direct descendant of Yi Je-ma, published the seventh edition (An Sang-wu, Yi Gyeong-seong, and Kim Jong-deok 2002: 299-301). Thus, no other Korean medical book in the 20th century except Yi Je-ma's medical book was published seven times throughout the span of fifty-some years. It means that Yi Je-ma's *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* has attracted considerable attention of clinicians.

Yi Je-ma's medicine was enlarged in its scale as it was stipulated as *Sasang* Medicine. Centering on the distinction of four constitutional types of human beings proposed by Yi Je-ma, medicine began to rest in quite a different situation to the existing system and formed an enormous academic system. In such fields as physiology, pathology, pharmacology, and acupuncture and moxibustion, it had to propose discussions on medicine and prescriptions that differed from the then current medicine centered on *wuxing* (five phases). Yi Je-ma laid down general principles of this medicine, built up the foundation of physiology, psychology, etiology, and discussions on prescription, but had not even studied acupuncture, moxibustion, or pharmacology.

Naturally, junior scholars tried to fill this gap and advocated that their medical study was based on "*sasang*" (four constitutional types) aside from Yi Je-ma's. In 1926, Won Ji-sang published *Dongui sasang sinpyeon* (New Edition of an Eastern Doctor's Four Constitutional Medicine); in 1936 Yi Min-bong wrote *Sasang geumgye uibang* (Prescriptions of Four Constitutional Medicine in the Gold Coffin); and in 1940, Yi Tae-ho published *Dongui sasang jinryo uijeon* (Clinical Books of Four Constitutional Medicine) (An Sang-wu, Yi Gyeong-seong, and Kim Jong-deok 2002: 299-301). These books contain the words "four constitutional types" in their titles and reveal that their contents deal with

Sasang Medicine. It is remarkable that these titles did not stand for the simple explanation and expatiation of Yi Je-ma’s *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* but stood for supplementing and enlarging Yi Je-ma’s medical system of “*sasangin*” (four constitutional types of human beings).

Among these books, Won Ji-sang’s *New Edition of an Eastern Doctor’s Four Constitutional Medicine* widened the parts of pharmacology, control of insect pests, and pathology that was lacking in Yi Je-ma’s medical system of “four constitutional types of human beings.” This book tried to distribute drugs according to four constitutional types. Therefore, it chose 111 kinds of drugs for greater *yin* persons, 72 kinds for lesser *yin* persons, and 83 kinds for lesser *yang* persons. In addition to the prescriptions suggested in *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*, it newly presented 25 prescriptions for greater *yin* persons, 43 for lesser *yin* persons, and 54 for lesser *yang* persons. Furthermore, it arranged and systematized four constitutional types of clinical experiences regarding damage from the cold in *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*. It also specialized clinicians in medicine of four constitutional type such as infectious diseases, various internal damages, surgery, gynecology, and pediatrics. Accordingly, it newly presented 228 kinds of symptoms: 42 kinds of infectious disease, 110 various internal diseases, 11 kinds of surgery, 31 kinds of gynecology, and 34 kinds of pediatrics (Institute of Medicine for Koreans at Yanbian in China 1992: 27-28). Thus, *New Edition of an Eastern Doctor’s Four Constitutional Medicine* greatly supplemented the clinical part in the medicine of four constitutional types of human beings, and had a negative influence regarding a later medical field. Later on, most of the junior scholars of *Sasang* Medicine followed this (Schools of Four Constitutional Medicine at the Colleges in Korea 1997: 36).

Clinical Books of Four Constitutional Medicine developed the ways of physical differentiation in discussions on pattern identification of *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*. Yi Tae-ho urged that, among the four constitutional types of human beings, “greater *yang* persons assume the shape of a dragon, greater *yin* persons the shape of a cow, lesser *yang* persons the shape of a horse, and lesser *yin* persons the shape of a donkey.” This book also added the ways to diagnose the entrails of a body through watching such exterior states as appearance, muscle, and physique, psychological states such as sentiment and temper, makings, and delicate symptoms. Furthermore, on the basis of clinical medicine of *New Edition of an*

Eastern Doctor's Four Constitutional Medicine, it fortified such clinical contents as the mechanism of the causes of disease, clinical symptoms and the principles of medical treatment, and completed medicine of four constitutional types (Schools of Four Constitutional Medicine at the Colleges in Korea 1997: 36).

By means of such enlargement and supplementation, Yi Je-ma's medicine of four constitutional types of human beings had proposed came to form a more far-reaching system of *Sasang* Medicine in its contents.

Discussions on Sasang Medicine within Traditional Korean Medicine: Constitutional Medicine vs. Nationalistic Medicine

It is not certain when the term “*Sasang* Medicine” began to be used. No record can be found that Yi Je-ma himself used the name. Recently, *Sasang uihak chobongwon* (First Edition of Four Constitutional Medicine), assumed to be written by Yi Je-ma, was found in Yanbian, China and the name *Sasang* Medicine seems to have been attached afterwards in this instance. It is because the title of the original copy was *Dongui susebowon sasang chogwonbon* (First Edition of Four Constitutional Medicine Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin by an Eastern Doctor) (Yi Chang-il 2003: 30). It seems that the term *Sasang* Medicine was not popular until the 1910s. The name *Sasang* Medicine had not appeared in works related to Yi Je-ma, *Hanbang uihakgye* (Magazine of Korean Traditional Medicine), *Exemplar of Korean Medicine*, or *Joseon uihakgye* (Magazine of Korean Medicine). According to the contents of *Hanbang uihakgye* (Magazine of Korean Traditional Medicine) in 1914, the outline of four constitutional types of human beings was explained under the title of “*Inyusangseol*” (A Theory that Human Beings Can Be Divided into Four Constitutional Types) as follows:

Come on, children, seniors, men and women, come and listen to me. Come on, people with parents, people with children, people loving themselves or others, come and listen to me. Once one is born, he cannot help falling ill. Once he becomes sick, he cannot help taking medicine. Once there is medicine, there must be a doctor. But there are *yin* and *yang* symptoms of a disease, and medicine also has the distinction of *yin* and *yang*. If a doctor gives a *yang* medicine to a patient with *yin* symptom of a disease, and vice versa, very probably he will kill the patient. How mis-

erable it is! One is born according to the four constitutional types: greater *yang*, greater *yin*, lesser *yang*, and lesser *yin*. Is the beautiful or the ugly of one’s physique the same? Never. Is the big or the small the same? Never. Is the generous or the fierce of one’s character the same? Never. Is the keen or the dull of one’s character the same? Never. The big or the small of one’s ear and nose, the long or the short of one’s eyes are never the same. Nor are the viscera of humans... Our entrails are not the same in size, and a doctor should give a different prescription to a patient. If only a doctor would give medicine according to four constitutional types, all the diseases would be cured. Yi Je-ma revealed for the first time what previous medical men had never found out. (Kang Won-hi 1914: 33)

The first manuscript by the name of *Sasang Medicine* in the magazine of Korean traditional medicine was “*Sasang uihagui haeseol*” (Interpretations for Four Constitutional Medicine) by Do Eun-gyu, which was published in *Dongseo uihak yeonguhoe wolbo* (Monthly Magazine of the Association for Researching Oriental and Western Medicine) from January 1924 to September 1925.¹ At the beginning of the writing, he clearly defined that “prolonging life and preserving the origin by eastern medicine was the *Sasang Medicine* composed of greater and lesser *yin* and *yang* by Dr. Yi Dong-mu thirty years ago” (Do Eun-gyu 1924: 26). Thus, the fact that a magazine dealt with the writing on *Sasang Medicine* for a long time reflects that Dongseo Uihak Yeonguhoe (The Association for Researching Oriental and Western Medicine) leading the field of Korean traditional medicine had had a deep interest in this medicine. Even though the mention of Do Eun-gyu was not the first concerning *Sasang Medicine*, it is clear that there was a tradition of calling the medicine proposed by Yi Je-ma as “*Sasang Medicine*.” The same connection can be applied to the fact that Won Ji-sang used “four constitutional types” in the title of his *New Edition of an Eastern Doctor’s Four Constitutional Medicine* in 1926. When Do Eun-gyu used the name of “*Sasang Medicine*,” he understood these two medical systems were dichromatic in comparison with Chinese medicine. However, he did not discuss both relations boldly. He only explained the philosophical princi-

1. This writing was published in Vol. 1 (January 1924), Vol. 2 (February 1924), Vol. 4 (March 1924), Vol. 6 (September 1924), and in Vol. 1 of an entirely new edition (October 1925) of *Dongseo uihak yeonguhoe wolbo* (Monthly Magazine of the Association for Researching Oriental and Western Medicine).

ples of *Sasang* Medicine, had an interest in the characteristics of *Sasang* Medicine “caused by pure human nature and principle, and morals.”

The prescription for the medical character of *Sasang* Medicine was positively tried at the turn of the 1930s. In 1933, Yi Eul-ho, a student of Keijo Pharmaceutical College, published an article on the main points saying “*Sasang* Medicine is constitutional medicine” in the *Gyowu hoeji* (Magazine of an Alumni Association of Keijo Pharmaceutical College). Nowadays, we are accustomed to the word “constitution” and the prescription that “*Sasang* Medicine is constitutional medicine” and cannot understand fully the boldness of then young scholars who connected *Sasang* Medicine with constitution. At that time, a medical discourse on constitution was very popular throughout society. There were a lot of discourses in newspapers and magazines such as “a certain constitution is connected with a certain disease; a certain constitution a certain character.” In particular, the discovery of four types of blood was recognized as crucial evidence of constitution theory. Thus, in spite of popular discourse on constitution, the origin of the discourse was western science in every respect. Accordingly, it is not a coincidence that “the constitution theory of *Sasang* Medicine” came from western pharmaceutics. Yi Eul-ho understood that *Sasang* Medicine was composed of four types of constitution and discussions on the four types of nature of human beings, and urged that “it is very similar to and has close relations with the theory of four types of human blood in serology and many psychological tempers” (Yi Eul-ho 1933: 8). Yi Eul-ho, who majored in pharmaceutics, denied a pharmaceutical characteristic that a peculiar phenomenon of drastic and poisonous medicine depended on various constitutions (Yi Eul-ho 1933: 13). He compared four types of such tempers related to four types of blood as a sanguine temper (B-type), a melancholic temper (A-type), a phlegmatic temper (O-type), and a choleric temper (AB-type) to a lesser *yang* type, a lesser *yin* type, a greater *yin* type, and a greater *yang* type respectively (Yi Eul-ho 1933: 23-4). Of course, in spite of the proviso that further study was needed in the future, Yi Eul-ho understood that both theories of *Sasang* Medicine that human beings can be divided into four constitutions and that human nature corresponds to four tempers contained the secrets of constitution and temper solved by modern science. His discussion did not stop there. He criticized the existing medicine on this basis. He criticized that both of the existing Korean traditional and western medicines were incomplete, being not far from symptomatic treatment that prescribed according to the symptom. Also, he evaluated that *Sasang* Medicine that found out the truth was “the fruit of long Oriental Medicine and

the theory that astounded the whole world” (Yi Eul-ho 1933: 7). Thus, Yi Eul-ho understood that *Sasang* Medicine was the completion of Oriental Medicine and urged that traditional Korean medicine surpassed Chinese medicine and Oriental medicine and Western medicine. Accordingly, Yi Eul-ho’s discourse on “constitutional medicine” excels the recognition of the “medical system based on constitution” and means the surpassing of both China and the Occident.

In 1935, Jo Heon-yeong, who was a great controversialist of Korean traditional medicine at that time, joined *Sasang* Medicine. He graduated from the Department of English at Waseda University, was one of the key members of Singanhoe (New Trunk Society), and was the very man who had caused a sensation with vulgar Korean traditional medicine in colonial Korean society during the middle and the latter half of the 1930s. In 1935, he led the publication of *Dongyang uihak* (Oriental Medicine) and was the chief editor of the magazine. In the first edition, Jo Heon-yeong interpreted *Sasang* Medicine as “nationalistic.”

Yi Je-ma always reminds us of the *sasangui* (four constitutional doctor) and vice versa. Dongmu Yi Je-ma was the greatest scholar of Chinese medicine that Joseon ever produced. Among Korean scholars who had evils of blind obedience and adherence to whatever came from China, he had a different tincture and his own unique medical viewpoint, exploring a virgin area and proposing a new medical theory. We should pay our respects to him, and it is also a congratulatory thing for Chinese medicine in Joseon... He tries to adjust the innumerable types of constitution of human beings to four types. There seems to be a little unreasonableness with this but critical review should be carried out in the future. Nevertheless, as this theory was created in Korea, we, Korean scholars of Chinese Medicine, cannot but learn *Sasang* Medicine as a matter of common sense. I will abstract and introduce some more important points later on. As I have not grasped the essence of *Sasang* Medicine, I cannot make any comment on the original text. I hope someone will be able to do it in the near future. (Hae San Saeng 1935: 59)

Aside from Yi Eul-ho, Jo Heon-yeong did not fully agree to the theory “classifying all human beings into four simple types of constitution,” but did support *Sasang* Medicine. The standpoint of Jo Heon-yeong on *Sasang* Medicine was to know Korean medicine very well from the level of Korean common sense. He also insisted on escaping from the worship of China. This attitude of Jo Heon-

yeong was different from the previous attitude of all scholars related to *Sasang* Medicine. They absolutely believed in *Sasang* Medicine and the support for this medicine thoroughly derived from it. However, Jo Heon-yeong raised a question about the absoluteness of this medicine and took a rather critical position. He accepted it because it was a unique medical system proposed by a Korean rather than the truth of the theory. In other words, it could be called nationalistic acceptance. In fact, it seems that this opinion of Jo Heon-yeong aimed at a lot of Korean physicians of Chinese medicine who opposed *Sasang* Medicine. The opposition against *Sasang* Medicine was not made public through the newspapers but prevailed on a large scale. They evaluated *Sasang* Medicine as “a heresy in medicine” (Yi Eul-ho 1935: 37; Compilation by the Editorial Department of Haenglim Seowon 1940: 3). Accordingly, the discourse of Jo Heon-yeong advocating “common sense” had a hidden meaning that “even though it was a heresy in learning, Koreans should not ignore the medical achievements of a Korean on purpose.” Jo Heon-yeong’s theory of *Sasang* Medicine was meaningful from the standpoint of its popularization. He was a distinguished man of letters, and introduced and publicized *Sasang* Medicine in the *Sindonga*, a famous magazine at that time (Jo Heon-yeong, October, 1935: 151-7).

***Sasang* Medicine Takes Root as a Scientific and Cultural Heritage Representing Joseon**

The place where discourse of *Sasang* Medicine flourished was outside of Korean traditional medicine rather than the interior. The center of discourse was groups of scholars, medical men, and researchers on scientific history who were interested in the culture and history of Joseon. Interested were well-known scholars of Joseon studies such as Yi Neung-hwa, Choe Ik-han, and Choe Nam-seon. Also, Hong Yi-seop, who had written a complete scientific history of Korea for the first time, and Miki Sakae, a Japanese scholar who had firstly begun to study the medical history of Korea, seriously paid attention to this medicine.

In 1929, *Byeolgeongon* (Extraordinary World) mentioned *Sasang* Medicine for the first time outside the field of traditional Korean medicine. This magazine was the one succeeding to *Gaebyeok* (The Opening and Closing) that was a major public magazine during Japanese colonial rule. Kim Byeong-je, the author of an article titled “A Chapter on Thrilling Eccentrics without a Match, the

Father of *Sasang* Medicine, a Modern Eccentric, Yi Je-ma” introduced Yi Je-ma as one of the modern eccentrics. This article was mostly composed of the episodes in Yi Je-ma’s learning and political activities and attached was a short comment on *Sasang* Medicine. “Yi Je-ma’s creative *Sasang* Medicine is an epoch-making revolution in Korean traditional medicine with thousands of years of tradition. As it is well-known to the world as *Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin* and causes new studies and experiments, we cannot help regarding him as the father of Korean invention” (Kim Byeong-je 1929: 19). In this article, Kim Byeong-je argued that Yi Je-ma’s *Sasang* Medicine was epoch-making in the history of Korean traditional medicine and that it was created in Joseon. Here, we must pay attention to the fact that *Byeolgeongon* (Extraordinary World) was not a Korean medical magazine but a public one. It means that the discourse of *Sasang* Medicine was not limited only to the medical world but became that of general academic and cultural world.

During Japanese colonial rule, a highlight of the discourse of *Sasang* Medicine was that Yi Je-ma was selected as one of 98 figures in *Joseon myeonginjeon* (Biographies of Famous People in Korean History). Yi Hun-gu wrote in the preface of *Joseon myeonginjeon* (Biographies of Famous People in Korean History) as follows: “Joseon has a long history as a cultural nation. Who can count the number of cultural contributors in this country? Who and what were they? What did they leave to us? We need to know about them. They were nothing more than our grandfathers and fathers. It would be a great shame in life not to know about the thoughts, projects, and characters our grandfathers left behind for posterity” (Mun Il-pyeong et al. 1988a: 9) and he also made certain that the publication of this book was in accordance with cherishing Korean cultural heritage. In this book, Yi Neung-hwa, author of *Joseon bulgyo tongsa* (A Complete History of Buddhism in Korea) and *Joseon musokgo* (Investigation of Korean Shamanic Culture) wrote the biographical part of Yi Je-ma’s life. Yi Neung-hwa had personal relation with Yi Je-ma to the degree that the latter stayed at the house of the former in Seoul and wrote some books on *Sasang* Medicine (Mun Il-pyeong et al. 1988b: 403). After Yi Je-ma stayed at Yi Neung-hwa’s house and cured him of his disease, Yi Neung-hwa introduced the characteristics of four constitutional types of human beings and the contents of *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* in brief. Here, he mentioned that *Sasang* Medicine was spread widely by literary men and disciples and became “conspicuous in our medical world” and evaluated that “as the theory is very deep and the effect excellent, it is an unprecedented discovery

in the world.” It is marvelous that Yi Je-ma’s name is on the list of *Joseon myeonginjeon* (Biographies of Famous People in Korean History). It was because he stood abreast with General Euljimundeok, King Sejong the Great, Admiral Yi Sun-sin, Jeong Yag-yong, and Kim Jeong-ho, etc. in this book. Yi Je-ma is the only figure from after the opening of the ports to be included in the list. And only Heo Jun was selected among the figures from the medical field in addition to Yi Je-ma. In this book, Yi Je-ma’s *Sasang* Medicine was prescribed as the medicine representing Joseon and as a very important cultural heritage of Joseon.

The contents of *Joseon myeonginjeon* were abstracted and introduced by a realist, Choe Ik-han, in *the Donga Ilbo* (Donga Daily Newspaper) in May 1940 (Choe Ik-han 1940). Accordingly, Choe Ik-han mentioned Yi Je-ma’s *Sasang* Medicine specially not because “Yi Je-ma was a famous medical man” but because “he developed a creative area by himself by means of *sasangwiseol* (the theory of four constitutional medicine).” Choe Ik-han thought highly of Yi Je-ma’s attitude, saying that “his observation is thorough, his experience careful, and his argument trustworthy. Really, it was a newly-cultivated area” and regarded it as a reform of the extremely conservative attitude of “the then ruling academic tradition busy in following the old-fashioned tradition of the older generation.” This mention of his revealed that the superiority of this medicine derived from the innovation of methods.

Meanwhile, in 1944, Hong Yi-Seop published *Joseon gwahaksa* (A History of Science in Korea), the first complete history of science in Korea, and it included *Sasang* Medicine. Hong Yi-seop’s writing on *Sasang* Medicine seems to have referred to *Joseonui jeokgo* (Studies on Korean Medical Books) by Mike Sakae in 1935 and there seems to be a different point in its contents. When Miki Sakae described the contents of *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* coolly, he just mentioned that *Sasang* Medicine was “an interesting theory to coincide with the four constitutional theory of Hippocrates” (Miki Sakae 1935: 60-61). That is, he did not mention “Korean unique achievements” that other Korean writers talked about. On the contrary, Hong Yi-seop mentioned that “the rise of Yi Je-ma’s *Sasang* Medicine that contributed to the peculiar development of modern Korean medicine was the most important epoch-making fact in technology and thought” and evaluated that *Sasang* Medicine was unique and epoch-making in Korea (Hong Yi-seop 1946: 196).

In 1947, soon after the liberation, Choe Nam-seon published a bestseller,

Joseon sangsik mundap (Questions and Answers about General Knowledge of Korean Culture), evaluating *Sasang* Medicine as follows: “During the Gojong dynasty, Yi Je-ma invented four types of different constitution of human beings and different medical principles and effective practice through unique investigation. And he called them four types of greater *yang*, lesser *yang*, greater *yin*, and lesser *yin* and published *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*, showing its outline. In reality, it is certainly a brightly shining light in Korean medicine” (Choe Nam-seon 1981: 46).

As was shown above, *Sasang* Medicine was regarded as a historical existence in the worlds of cultural and scientific history, except in the world of Chinese medicine. All Korean writers, except a Japanese scholar, Miki Sakae, thought highly of its creativity and made clear that it was a very important part of the Korean medical heritage and, furthermore, Korean culture. Of course, though Yi Neung-hwa talked about the experimental facts that this medicine showed in terms of its effectiveness in the clinical area, highest importance was given to “unique Korean” things. This medicine reached this situation in less than fifty years, and within twenty years or so later, in the middle of the 1920s, it was still discussed seriously.

Conclusion

In 1940, Yi Tae-ho published *Clinical Books of Four Constitutional Medicine* and tried to widen scientific and clinical research on *Sasang* Medicine, saying as follows: “The *Sasang* Medicine of Dongmu Yi Je-ma is an epoch-making scientific theory that has unearthed an unexplored area even though it has chosen carefully and explained closely the concept of ‘Otaeinnon’ (五態人論, Discussion on Five Types of Human Beings) of ‘Tongcheonpyeon’ (通天編, Chapter on Leading to the Heavens) of *Lingshu*. For a while, certain unsympathetic scholars have criticized it unfavorably as ‘a medical heresy.’ As most scholars came to acknowledge the theory of four types of blood by Karl Landsteiner, they also came to recognize the miraculous principles, practical use, and marvelous effectiveness of *Sasang* Medicine. Recently, it is the general tendency of the medical world to enter into this medicine” (Compilation by the Editorial Department of Haenglim Seowon 1940: 3). Why are we interested in *Sasang* Medicine? The above quotation implies some clues. He points out three elements such as the “miraculous principles, practical use, and marvelous effec-

tiveness of *Sasang* Medicine based on the constitutional theory.” First of all, we can think about the effectiveness of *Sasang* Medicine. Many clinicians might have thought highly of this point and accepted *Sasang* Medicine. However, as was shown in this article, we can see that some clinicians regarded *Sasang* Medicine as ‘a medical heresy’ and did not accept it.

Perhaps, the “practical use” Yi Tae-ho mentioned will be one of the most important attractions of *Sasang* Medicine. From the pure clinical point of view, *Sasang* Medicine seems to be very practical compared with previous general medicine. Contrary to the complexity of the then-existing Korean traditional medicine, diagnosing and making an induction from *yin* and *yang*, chill and fever, weakness and firmness, and appearance and mind, the process of *Sasang* Medicine from distinction of constitution to diagnosis seems to be very practical. This aspect is important for *Sasang* Medicine to become popular from the clinical point of view. *Bangyak happyeon* (A Medical Book Binding Prescriptions and Drugs) by Hwang Do-yeon and Hwang Pil-su, father and son, published in the same era that *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean* was published together with *Sasang* Medicine seem to have been the two greatest medical books. In this sense, the former surpassed the latter to a considerable degree in popularity.

However, in “miraculous principles,” *Bangyak happyeon* (A Medical Book Binding Prescriptions and Drugs) could not be a match for *An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean*. The unprecedented concept of four constitutional types of human beings and the development of miraculous principles widening its phases into physiology, psychology, and pathology attracted the attention of both clinicians and scholars who were interested in philosophy and thought. Meanwhile, the phases of constitution and tempers of four constitutional types of human beings attract basic curiosity of “patterning one’s own body” even from the common people who have not understood their contents. Perhaps, these are the elements that can make *Sasang* Medicine prevalent.

Taking various elements into consideration, I believe that the most important cause of *Sasang* Medicine becoming a nation-wide interest in Korea today is the logic proposed by Jo Heon-yeong in that “Koreans should be interested in medicine developed by a Korean.” This point of view had something in common with those of famous scholars such as Yi Neung-hwa and Choe Nam-seon, etc. who were interested in Korean culture at that time. It also had something in common with the viewpoints of the mass media, *the Donga Daily Newspaper*

and *the Chosun ilbo* (Chosun Daily Newspaper). No other medical system except for *Sasang* Medicine could meet the medical requirements needed in the nationalistic 20th century. The incoming of Western forces caused the reconstruction of Korean medicine. Western medicine became the central medicine; accordingly, Korean traditional medicine became described as old medicine. Western doctors refuted those who opposed the acceptance of Western and foreign medicine, saying as follows: “Is traditional Korean medicine nothing more than old foreign medicine from China?” Some highly acknowledged the existence of Korean medicine, of which Yi Je-ma’s creative medicine was part, in traditional Korean medicine aside from Chinese medicine under such circumstances. Junior scholars prescribed Yi Je-ma’s medicine as *Sasang* Medicine and counterattacked Western medical men. They mentioned that *Sasang* Medicine had advanced a step farther than Chinese medicine and, furthermore, had surpassed Western medicine, distributing the discourse. In *Sasang* Medicine, junior scholars found ways to solve the two nationalistic tasks that should get beyond Chinese and Western medicine that Korean traditional medicine had confronted during the first half of the 20th century. This situation was not limited to the inside of the medical world. All eyes of the researchers of “Joseon studies” who had tried to find a unique Korean heritage turned toward this peculiar, systematic, and innovative *Sasang* Medicine. Their Joseon studies had a motto of knowing about national culture and learning properly, which could be called “nationalistic” in a broad sense.

References

- An Sang-wu, ed. 2001. *Hanguk uihakjaryo jipseong* (Compilation of Materials on Traditional Korean Medicine) Vol. II, compiled with introduction. Seoul: Institute for Korean Traditional Medicine.
- An Sang-wu, Yi Gyeong-seong, and Kim Jong-deok. 2002. *Yi Je-ma pyeong-jeon* (A Critical Biography of Yi Je-ma). Seoul: Korean Broadcasting Publication.
- Choe Ik-han. 1940. “Yi Je-ma seonsaengui ipji yuram” (A Success Story of Yi Je-ma), Part I-II. *The Donga Daily Newspaper*. May 14-15.
- Choe Nam-seon. 1981. *Joseon sangsik mundap* (Questions and Answers about General Knowledge of Korean Culture), Sequel. Samsung Foundation for Arts and Culture, p. 46.

- Do Eun-gyu. 1924. "Sasang uihakui haeseol" (An Explanation of *Sasang* Medicine). *Dongseo uihak yeonguhoi wolbo* (Monthly Magazine of the Association for Researching Oriental and Western Medicine), January edition.
- Editorial Department of Haenglim Seowon, compiled. 1940. *Dongui sasang jinryo uijeon* (Clinical Books of Four Constitutional Medicine). Seoul: Haenglim Seowon.
- Hae San Saeng. 1935. "Yi Je-ma sasang uiron chorok" (A Summary of Yi Je-ma's Four Constitutional Medicine). *Dongyang uiyak* (Oriental Medicine). Vol. 1. Seoul: Dongyang Uiyak Publication.
- Han Yeong-mok, ed. 1994. *Do-ol dongui susebowon gangnon* (Discussions of Do-ol on "Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin by an Eastern Doctor"). Seoul: Do-ol Seowon.
- Hong Yi-seop. 1946. *Joseon gwahaksa* (A History of Science in Korea). Seoul: Jeongeumsa.
- Institute of Medicine for Koreans at Yanbian in China, ed. 1992. *Joseon minjok-sasang uihak* (Four Constitutional Medicine of Korean Race). Seoul: Yeogang Publishing Co.
- Kang Won-hi. 1914. "Inyusasangseol" (Theory of Human Beings Divided into Four Constitutional Types). *Hanbang uihakgye* (Magazine of Korean Traditional Medicine), Vol. 2. Seoul: Society of Korean Medical Men.
- Kim Byeong-je. 1929. *Byeolgeongon* (Extraordinary World), August 22.
- Miki Sakae (三木榮). 1935. *Joseon uijeokgo* (Studies on Korean Medical Books). Tokyo: Academic Society of Japanese Doctors.
- Mun Il-pyeong et al. 1988a. *Joseon myeonginjeon* (Biographies of Famous People in Korean History), Vol. 1. Seoul: Joseon Ilbosa.
- _____. 1988b. *Joseon myeonginjeon* (Biographies of Famous People in Korean History), Vol. 2. Seoul: Joseon Ilbosa.
- Myeong Min. 1935. "Sasang uihake daehayeo" (On Four Constitutional Medicine). *Sindonga*, October edition.
- Schools of Four Constitutional Medicine at Colleges in Korea, ed. 1992. *Sasang Medicine* (Four Constitutional Medicine). Seoul: Jimundang.
- Yi Chang-il. 2003. *Sasang uihak, momui cheollhak maeumui geongang* (*Sasang* Medicine, Philosophy of the Body, and Well-Being of the Mind). Seoul: Chaeksesang.
- Yi Eul-ho. 1933. "Sasangnon" (Discussions on Four Constitutional Types). *Gyowu hoeji* (Magazine of an Alumni Association of Keijo Pharmaceutical

College), Vol. 3. Seoul: Keijo Pharmaceutical College.

- _____. 1935. “Sasang uihaknon” (Discussions on Four Constitutional Medicine). *Dongyang uiyak* (Oriental Medicine), Vol. 2. Seoul: Dongyang Uiyak Publication.
- Yi Je-ma. 1894a. “Dongui susebowon soeuminnon gwonji 2--*Sasangin* byeonje-ungnon” (Book 2 of Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin by an Eastern Doctor: Discussions on Lesser *Yin* Person-Discussions on Pattern Identification by Four Constitutional Types of Human Beings), an old edition discovered in Hamsan Sachon. Reprinted in An Sang-wu, ed., *Hanguk uihakjaryo jipseong* (Compilation of Materials on Traditional Korean Medicine) Vol. II, compiled with introduction. Seoul: Institute for Korean Traditional Medicine, 2001.
- _____. 1894b. “Dongui susebowon taeuminnon gwonji 4-*Sasangin* byeonje-ungnon” (Book 4 of Prolonging Life and Preserving the Origin by an Eastern Doctor: Discussions on a Greater *Yin* Person-Discussions on Pattern Identification by Four Constitutional Types of Human Beings). *Dongui susebowon* (An Essential Medical Book for Preserving Human Health Written by a Korean), an old edition discovered in Hamsan Sachon. Reprinted in An Sang-wu, ed., *Hanguk uihakjaryo jipseong* (Compilation of Materials on Traditional Korean Medicine) Vol. II, compiled with introduction. Seoul: Institute for Korean Traditional Medicine, 2001.

Shin Dongwon received his Ph.D. in history of Korean science from Seoul National University. He is currently Research Professor in the School of Humanities and Social Science at KAIST (Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology). He is involved in a project covering his main interests in the history of Korean medicine, the historical identity of traditional Korean medicine, and modernization of traditional medicine.

к с і