

Royal Education of Princes in the Reign of King Sejong

Jung Jae-Hoon

This study is about the royal education of princes in the reign of King Sejong. King Sejong was the third son of King Taejong. As the eldest brother was the Crown Prince designate, there was only a faint possibility of Prince Sejong succeeding to the throne. As a result, only limited opportunities existed for him to prepare for the succession to the throne. Prince Sejong was partial to learning and achieved a high level of learning despite these challenges and limited time in which he could receive educate before ascending to the throne.

King Sejong laid the foundation for a proper royal education of princes after his coronation. The government administration of the early Joseon era was made fundamentally secure during the period of King Taejong, which made it possible for the period of King Sejong to be prosperous. The same thing was true in the field of royal education.

Seoyeon (書筵), a preparation for royal education, was taken from textbooks on Neo-Confucianism. As for the education of royal princes, it was based on the curriculum of teaching the Four Books (四書), *Book of Filial Piety* (孝經) and *Book of Elementary Learning* (小學). In the meantime, *Ta-hsüeh yen-i* (大學衍義) and *Sayak yojib* (絲綸要集) were read and examined in Seoyeon conferences. A model of education of royal princes was founded and implemented during the reign of King Sejong.

Keywords: education of royal princes, Seoyeon, *Ta-hsüeh yen-i*, *Sayak yojib*

Introduction

King Sejong contributed to the foundations of the Joseon dynasty. He came to the throne at the age of 27 after the foundation of the Joseon dynasty and had a

responsibility to establish this newly born dynasty. King Sejong was the third son of King Taejong and his eldest brother was the Crown Prince. In the order of succession there existed only a faint possibility for the succession of Prince Sejong to the throne. He had been the Crown Prince for only two months (June 3 till August 11, 1418) before he ascended to the throne and there existed limited opportunities to prepare for the succession to the throne until after he became the Crown Prince.

The unexpected appointment of Prince Chungnyeong as the Crown Prince and the process of enthronement showed a process of sudden political changes during the early Joseon period. King Taejong would have wanted to reduce the political turmoil soon after the deposition of the Crown Prince Yangnyeong and appoint the third prince as the Crown Prince.¹ There then became a strong possibility that King Sejong would be enthroned in a short time. King Sejong had limited time to prepare for the throne as he had been the Crown Prince for only a short period.

There are few original materials left on the childhood and education of King Sejong that this article can survey. This article will indirectly assume the childhood and education of King Sejong by reviewing the general aspects of educating royal princes in the early Joseon period (Lee Seok-gyu 1986: 110).² King Sejong built to a certain degree the foundations of educating royal princes of the Joseon dynasty during his reign. In the case of the national system established in the early Joseon dynasty, the basis of the system began to be established during the reign of King Taejong. The system was arranged to a certain degree during the reign of King Sejong with the arrangement and supplementation continuing until King Seongjong. As result the formal system for educating royal princes was arranged during the reign of King Sejong. This article will reveal the contribution of King Sejong to the education of royal princes.

The most qualified teaching staff and materials were selected for the education of the royal princes from which the future king would be selected from to lead the country. Accordingly, to review the teaching materials and staff who took charge of the education of royal princes reveals the ideological intention of Joseon at that time.

1. Refer to Choe Seung-hi (1990) for the details that King Taejong deposed Crown Prince Yangnyeong and appointed the third prince as the Crown Prince.

2. Refer to Lee Seok-gyu (1986) on Seoyeon (royal lectures to teach Chinese classics to the Crown Prince) for educating royal princes in the early Joseon dynasty.

In contrast to the Goryeo dynasty based on Buddhism, Joseon dynasty adopted seongnihak (Neo-Confucianism) and was eager to lead the country on that ideological basis. The same was true of the educating royal princes as *seongnihak* became part of one of the most important contents of the education of the royal princes.

The Arrangement of the Educational System for Royal Princes

1. Before King Sejong

The exclusive educational system for royal princes before the coronation of King Sejong was included in the government organization for civil and military officials after King Taejo came to the throne. The official attendants on the Crown Prince held two concurrent positions of lecturers (Ganghak) and court guards (Siwi). They were composed of one of each of the right and left Sa (official rank of Jeong 2-pum), one of each of the right and left Bingaek (official rank of Jong 2-pum), one of each of the right and left Bodeok (official rank of Jong 3-pum), one of each of the right and left Pilseon (official rank of Jeong 4-pum), one of each of the right and left Munhak (official rank of Jeong 5-pum), one of each of the right and left Sagyeong (official rank of Jeong 6-pum), one of each of the right and left Jeongja (official rank of Jeong 7-pum), one of each of the right and left Sijik (official rank of Jeong 8-pum) and four of Seori (*Taejo sillok* [Veritable Records of King Taejo], July 28, 1392). Among them, the officials of the right and left Sa to the right and left Jeongja but excluding the right and left Sijik in charge of guarding the Crown Prince and Seori were in charge of educating the Crown Prince. This system is almost the same as that of Goryeo education system for the Crown Prince which was established during the reign of King Gongyang of the Goryeo dynasty except for the official positions of Seoyeon (royal lectures to teach Chinese Classics to the Crown Prince) and the right and left Jeongja to educate the Crown Prince. It is understood that this system perfectly succeeded that of Goryeo.

Although the early Joseon dynasty succeeded the official system of Goryeo, there was little difference from the system of Goryeo in managing the education of the Crown Prince. There were two instances like Jeong Do-jeon was Isa for the Crown Prince in 1395 (*Veritable Records of King Taejo*, March 13, 1395)³ and the right and left deputy Bingaek were newly established together with the

right and left Bingaek (official rank of Jong 2-pum) and Han Sang-gyeong and Yu Gyeong were appointed as the right and left deputy Bingaek in the same year (*Veritable Records of King Taejo*, May 11, 1395).

With the enthronement of King Taejong a turning point was initiated in the education of the Crown Prince. King Taejong analyzed the problems in the process of coming into power into consideration; he established Gyeongseungbu for the eldest prince and paid special attention in the education of the Crown Prince (*Taejong sillok* [Veritable Records of King Taejong], April 28, 1402). He began an earlier education of the eldest prince before appointing him as the Crown Prince. King Taejong wanted to send his eldest son at the age of eight to a monk for education. Park Seok-myeong, Jisinsa indicated to King Taejong that education by a mountain monk had been due to an inevitable situation caused by the collapse of the education system at the end of the Goryeo dynasty. It was decided that the eldest prince should be lectured and cultivated in proper moral character at SungKyunKwan. King Taejong accepted this suggestion and ordered the preparation of a school site for the eldest prince at SungKyunKwan (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, August 22, 1401). Afterwards, a school palace for the eldest prince Yangnyeong was completed in May 1402 (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, May 6, 1402) and he entered SungKyunKwan as the eldest prince in April 1403 (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, April 8, 1403). Accordingly, the Crown Prince Yangnyeong began to study at close location to the palace and Gyeongseungbu took charge of education of the Crown Prince until Sigangwon for the Crown Prince was established in 1408 (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, October 25, 1408).

It is suggestive that King Taejong (who had passed the erudite examination at the end of the Goryeo dynasty) took a monk into consideration as an instructor to educate the Crown Prince. Even though the public education system of the late Goryeo had collapsed, it acknowledged that an inclination towards education dependent on Buddhism was not totally disregarded. It is significant that King Taejong accepted the education of the Crown Prince at SungKyunKwan in preparing a standard for the education of the Crown Prince in the Joseon dynasty. It was not completely necessary to study at SungKyunKwan for the

3. Isa who taught the Crown Prince the Classics of Confucianism was not established in the Joseon dynasty but had been evidently established in the Goryeo dynasty according to the records of King Chungyeol, Goryeo (*History of Goryeo Dynasty* Vol. 29, Sega, December 29, 1280).

education of the Crown Prince. There was no problem that an exclusive institution like Seoyeon would take charge of educating the Crown Prince. It was meaningful that King Taejong wanted the eldest prince to enter SungKyunKwan and study there.

In Goryeo, there was also an opportunity for the Crown Prince to study at the National Academy. It is known that an article of *History of Goryeo* the Crown Prince entered the National Academy in the 12th year of King Chungyeol and studied the Six Classics shows that the education of the Crown Prince was provided at the National Academy (*History of Goryeo Dynasty*, Sega, July 30, 1286). However, except for the records of King Chungyeol it not known whether the education of the Crown Prince was provided continuously at SungKyunKwan. On the contrary, during the Joseon dynasty (since King Taejong) it was customary for the Crown Prince to enter SungKyunKwan.⁴ After King Sejong the entrance regulations for not only the Crown Prince but also royal family including royal princes were provided, allowing them to enter SungKyunKwan (*Sejong sillok* [Veritable Records of King Sejong], the Entrance Ceremony of Royal Kinsfolk, January 6, 1430; May 17, 1430). In spite of the entrance ceremony for the eldest prince performed by SungKyunKwan, he had not received a continuous education at SungKyunKwan. Although a school palace for the eldest prince was built at the northeastern corner of SungKyunKwan, the detailed length of the continuous education received there is not known (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, April 24, 1402).

The fact that the family including the Crown Prince and princes entered SungKyunKwan even symbolically meant that the center of education for the Crown Prince was within the boundary of *seongnihak*. SungKyunKwan was the site of a Confucian shrine that was dedicated to the founder of Confucianism.

King Taejong arranged the system of Royal Lectures Given to the Crown Prince on Confucian Classics (Seoyeon) and decided the method to teach the Crown Prince. Lecturers (Seoyeongwan) were appointed with two or more positions concurrently since King Taejo decided how to appoint the official attendants for the Crown Prince, resulting in a problem of fewer lecturers who could be allocated for the education of the Crown Prince. To solve this problem, King Taejong accepted the suggestion of Office of the Censor General (Saganwon)

4. See Table 7 on The Present Situation of Entrance of the Crown Prince by Lee Seong-mu (1967: 257).

and ordered that the lecturers below the official rank Bodeok not attend the main office but be indulged in the duty of Seoyeon (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, June 29, 1405). Such an order did not provide satisfactory results as shown by the fact that Saganwon raised this problem once again two years later when the problem of holding two or more positions concurrently had not been solved (Lee Seok-gyu 1986: 7-8). Saganwon set up a memorial to the throne that the official attendants below Bodeok to Jeongja should be exempted from duty at the main office and be absorbed in lectures with a censor (Daegan) attending. In the following year 1407, King Taejong accepted the suggestion of the Ministry of Rites and arranged the procedure of rites with a censor attending at Seoyeon. The problem of holding two or more positions concurrently was solved to a certain degree (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, April 22, 1407).

In 1408, King Taejong accepted the suggestion of Office of the Censor General (Saganwon) and Gwon Geun and had the Crown Prince attend Seoyeon every day to study the Classics of Confucianism and discuss the importance of them once a day (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, December 1, 1408). In 1413, King Taejong had the officials in charge of Seoyeon present the syllabus for teaching the Crown Prince and standardized the way of the studying and discussing for the Crown Prince. The particulars of the studying and discussing of the Crown Prince are as follows (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, September 9, 1413):

1. At sunrise every day the Crown Prince attended class and the lecturers below the official rank Isa take turns lecturing. They are lecturing two or three chapters on the history and the Classics of Confucianism, repeating ten times in the morning and five or ten times in the afternoon and finishing at Sinsi (between three and five o'clock in the afternoon).
2. Whenever the Crown Prince moves during the day, the chief eunuch and Sayak (official in charge of all keys to palace gates) on duty are to inform Seoyeon and Gyeongseungbu. If not, they must acknowledge any oversight to a censor.
3. An official on night duty at Gyeongseungbu and Sayak on night duty inside the gate of the palace must report and then the gate opens or closes.
4. There is a rule for night watch. Each official of Gyeongseungbu and Sugwisa must be on night duty outside the northwestern wall every other day.

5. Where ever the wall of the palace is low and short, it is to be reconstructed higher and denser and must not be looked over.

In the particulars of lectures, not only the items concerning lectures but also the way of night watch for the Crown Prince were presented. It can be known that lecturing and royal guard were not separated until 1413. It was in 1418 that the function of lecturing and royal guard was separated in the official attendants on the Crown Prince. King Taejong established Ikvisa and changed the existing right and left Sawi for the Crown Prince into the right and left Ikwi and then the right and left Ikwi into the right and left Ikchan (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, June 7, 1418). Ikvisa remained in the reign of King Sejong and took exclusive charge of the attendance and guard of the Crown Prince (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, March 11, 1423).

2. The Arrangement of King Sejong

After his enthronement King Sejong designated the eldest prince (to become King Munjong) at age eight as Crown Prince (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, October 26, 1421). When the eldest prince became eight years old in January before designating him as Crown Prince, King Sejong had Sin Jang and Kim Ja, academicians of the Hall of Worthies teach Elementary Learning (Sohak) to the eldest prince (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 12, 1421). In October 1421, King Sejong appointed the eldest prince as the Crown Prince and in the following month November he opened Seoyeon and began the education of the Crown Prince.⁵ In December, King Sejong had the Crown Prince enter SungKyunKwan (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, December 25, 1421). For education of the Crown Prince, King Sejong arranged the meeting ceremony with Sabu and Bingaek and the lecturing ceremony at Seoyeon. King Sejong also tried to solve the problem of lecturers holding two or more positions concurrently since King Taejong and established Jonghak for education of the royal family.

King Sejong concretely arranged not a few things concerning Seoyeon

5. Just before appointing the eldest prince as the Crown Prince, King Sejong appointed four officials of the Hall of Worthies as the right and left Bodeok, the left Munhak and the left Sageyeong (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, October 26, 1421).

together with the ceremony concerning the way of coping with the emergency case like an accident of lecturer and honored guest (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, December 12, 1422), concerning the meeting schedule of Sa, Bu and Isa (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, October 14, 1427), and concerning the attendance of Daegwan at Seoyeon (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 16, 1428). King Sejong also rearranged the meeting ceremony with Sa, Bu, and Bingaek as well as the lecturing ceremony at Seoyeon (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, June 4, 1431) by incorporating them in Seoyeonjingangui as garye, which is one of the Five Principal Rites.

The problem of holding two or more positions concurrently was not solved only by the royal order but was raised continuously because full-time lecturers could not switch paid jobs. As lecturers had two or more positions concurrently and performed duties at the main office, it happened that Seoyeon was delayed, resulting in a problem with the consistency of educating the Crown Prince. To solve this problem, King Sejong appointed two assistant lecturers of each Bodeok, Pilseon, Munhak, Sagyeong and Jeongja as paid officials through discussion of the State Council in 1431. However, in 1435 four years later, the system of paid lecturers was abolished and changed again into the post of holding two or more positions concurrently. This resulted from the treatment when the officials of the Hall of Worthies concurrently held the position of lecturers. In 1436, King Sejong had the officials of each office except the Hall of Worthies hold Seoyeongwan concurrently by the request of the State Council but eventually had the ten officials of the Hall of Worthies hold Seoyeon exclusively. The problem of holding two or more positions concurrently was formally solved. The lecturers were changed into full-time paid officials and the officials of the Hall of Worthies came to hold Seoyeongwan again. However, the situation was not simply worsened because Seoyeongwan changed from full-time officials into the system the officials of the Hall of Worthies held Seoyeongwan concurrently. But the contents were strengthened from the viewpoint of Seoyeon because the scholastic specialty of the officials of the Hall of Worthies was guaranteed.⁶ The system only the officials of the Hall of Worthies held Seoyeongwan

6. Refer to an article by Lee Seok-gyu (1986: 9-11). In July 1435, there were 32 members at the Hall of Worthies, among whom 22 took charge of Gyeongyeon while ten took charge of Seoyeon. Since 1438, the regular staff of the Hall of Worthies was fixed at 20. The staff for Gyeongyeon was reduced from 22 to ten while a staff for Seoyeon was set at ten. This reflects that the function of Seoyeon was not weakened. Refer also to an article by Choe Seung-hi (1966: 21-2).

concurrently continued at Seoyeon during the reign of King Munjong and in 1456 the Hall of Worthies was innovated while Seoyeon consisted of six paid officials and four officials who held two or more positions concurrently (*Veritable Records of King Sejo*, July 12, 1456).

The status of Seoyeongwan was raised when Cheomsawon was established in the late King Sejong period. King Sejong established Cheomsawon because of health problems despite the opposition from the subjects in 1442 and had the Crown Prince decide upon general affairs. Accordingly, there were a lot of state affairs discussed without precedent at Seoyeon in the *Veritable Records* as follows: the problem of supervising the examination by sending an inspector to the Gyeonggi local examination (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 5, 1444), the discussion about saving leather of the office of arms and its transportation (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 10, 1444), the discussion about whether stopping the construction of a fortress in Pyeongan Province or not (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 23, 1444), the discussion about ending the felling of pine trees to construct warships against Japanese pirates (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 26, 1444), the discussion about dividing court musicians at the Shrine of Royal Ancestors into the higher- or lower-level officials and putting in force and the discussion about stopping evaluating the field (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 27, 1444), the discussion about opposing the abolition of the Licentiate Examination because of impertinent behavior (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 29, 1444), the discussion about the way to end the emigration of inhabitants of Uiju, and the establishment of more local offices to make Uiju prosper (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, February 3, 1444), the discussion about sending the official in charge of dry-field grain and helping the people during the year of bad harvest (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, May 15, 1444), the discussion about regulating the Law on Coercion (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, June 5, 1444), the discussion about a correct means to end public nuisances in three Southern Provinces (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, November 4, 1445), the discussion about stopping the dispatch of an inspector to make guns (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, November 8, 1445), and the discussion about opposing the abolition of the reporting system to the King (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, November 22, 1445), etc.

King Sejong established the institution for education of the royal family, Jonghak for the first time. In 1427, the Ministry of Rites suggested that a school building should be built outside Geonchunmun in accordance with the system of

Tang and Sung and sons of the royal family at the age of eight should study there. In July 1428, the institution was established (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, September 4, 1427; July 18, 1428). Although there were SungKyunKwan in Seoul and schools at each office and Ju, Bu, Gun and Hyeon, there was no institution for the education of the royal family. Therefore, a new school building was built and instructors took charge of educating the sons of royal family above eight years of age.

The instructors of Jonghak were comprised of one of each of Jong 3-pum (official rank), Jong 4-pum, Jong 5-pum and Jong 6-pum (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, February 3, 1429). As the number of sons in the royal family increased, instructors also increased by degrees. At the beginning of Jonghak, the instructors were called Haksa and the instructors of SungKyunKwan held the position concurrently (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, March 6, 1430). In June 1433, Kim Mal, Jikgang of Sunkyunkwan and Nam Su-mun, Busuchan of the Hall of Worthies began to teach princes and the officials of the Hall of Worthies also began to join in the education of sons of the royal family (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, June 9, 1433). Afterwards, according to the increase of the number of students, two doctors of Jonghak were appointed (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, August 24, 1433). The level of education of sons of royal family is seen to have increased when the officials of the Hall of Worthies joined the royal lecture. As the duties of the officials of the Hall of Worthies increased, less number of officials participated in the royal lecture (Choe Seung-hi 1966: 26-7).

Together with the arrangement of institution the interest of King Sejong in Jonghak continued consistently. King Sejong suggested that the royal family should enter Jonghak and that they should be punished in case of any violation. In the ceremony of Jonghak provided by the Ministry of Rites in 1430, the curricula of Jonghak were precisely prescribed as to the schedule of lectures, studying method, evaluation and punishment in case of absence (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, March 7, 1430). A royal order to Jongbusi indicated that the Book of Elementary Learning and the Four Books should be read essentially and emphasized that a culture of *seongnihak* should be fostered (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, June 17, 1443).

It is characteristic of the instructors of the Hall of Worthies to join in the education of the Crown Prince at Seoyeongwan. Other characteristics of the arrangement for educating the Crown Prince was that King Sejong had officials of high academic achievements concurrently hold the position of instructors

regardless of original duties, and furthermore, the education system was changed to center on the main academic institution, the Hall of Worthies.

Training Received by King Sejong as the Crown Prince, and the Contents of Education

1. The Training for King Sejong as the Crown Prince

King Sejong was the third son of King Taejong. King Sejong was appointed as Chungnyeonggun at the age of twelve in February on the eighth year of the reign of King Taejong. He was raised to Chungnyeong Daegun at the age of sixteen in May on the twelfth year of King Taejong. After Yangnyeong Daegun was deposed as the Crown Prince, King Sejong became the Crown Prince in June 1418 at the age of 22. In August only two months later he ascended to the throne and as a result the records before King Sejong came to the throne are scarce because the records before the Crown Prince had been very limited. Referring to the Veritable Records this paper is still able to survey the studying of King Sejong as a Prince and the Crown Prince even in fragments.

King Sejong did not receive education at a regular school when he was Chungnyeonggun and Chungnyeong Daegun before becoming the Crown Prince. An educational system like Jonghak for teaching the royal family did not exist and invited instructors taught King Sejong before he became the Crown Prince. King Taejong appointed Chungnyeonggun as Chungnyeong Daegun and three months later he found an instructor to teach Hyoryeong Daegun and Chungnyeong Daegun. Daesaseong of SungKyunKwan recommended a successful candidate for the minor civil service examination (Saengwon) Lee Su for his proficiency in the Classics of Confucianism (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, August 12, 1412). Lee Su passed the minor civil service examination first on the list in 1396 (*Veritable Records of King Taejo*, June 1, 1396), whose academic achievements were recognized so that he could be recommended as a Reader of Official Royal Lectures (Sidokgwan) in Royal Lectures to teach Chinese Classics to the King (Gyeongyeon) (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, July 28, 1407). Lee Su studied at SungKyunKwan since he passed the minor civil service examination first on the list but had not yet passed the second stage of civil service examination.

It can be known that the academic achievements of Lee Su were highly rec-

ognized seeing that he was invited as an instructor for Daegun second to the Crown Prince. A profile of Lee Su in Jolgi illustrates this very well. It indicates that “Lee Su did not follow the Buddhist funeral rites during the mourning for his mother, was not fond of demonstration because of his grave manner and did not like gathering wealth” (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, April 18, 1430). It can be assumed that Lee Su was worthy of becoming an instructor for Daegun because he was faithful to the funeral rites of *seongnihak* rather than Buddhism, did not try to gather wealth but tried to live a simple life. According as King Sejong became the Crown Prince, Lee Su also became Seoyeongwan and afterwards King Sejong treated him with special respect.

There are few records to show that King Sejong was fond of learning at the age of sixteen before he became Daegun. But King Sejong told Gyeongyeongwan he had read *Jachitonggam gangmok* (Abridged Essentials of Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government) many times at Gyeongyeon. According to the comment of an official in charge of history, King Sejong was very fond of learning even before the enthronement, never stopped reading during a slight illness and read the remaining *Gusosugan* repeatedly even though King Taejong had a eunuch hide the books. It is said that always read during meal times saying, “I have never been idle without doing anything at palace.” His dedicated studies gave him a good command of the Classics of Confucianism and the books on a traditional dictum for diplomatic relationship with China. It is also said that King Sejong studied Chinese books on translation to prepare for the meeting with an envoy of Ming (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, December 23, 1423).

Some records exist on the learning by King Sejong during his period of Daegun. To make a folding screen, Seoyeongwan drew pictures of the contents abstracted from *Hyohaengnok* (Records of the Deeds of Filial Piety) and wrote on it a eulogy of Lee Je-hyeon and an interpretation of Gwon Geun. The Crown Prince had Chungnyeong Daegun interpret it. On his request, Chungnyeong Daegun at the age of 17 explained the meaning precisely (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, December 30, 1413). When King Taejong said “When a man at home is exposed to rain, he will always remember the pains of a traveler,” Chungnyeong Daegun at the age of twenty retorted, “According to *Sigyeong* (Book of Poetry), ‘when a stork cries on a hill, a wife sighs at home,’” satisfying King Taejong (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, February 9, 1416). In the same year, there was a banquet with an ex-king at Gyeonghoeru in Gyeongbok Palace and many subjects competitively wrote a couplet. In the meantime, in

response to a couplet “a man who is experienced and familiar with making speeches should not be abandoned,” Chungnyeong Daegun said “According to a Confucian classic, it is said, ‘An old and experienced man (Gisujun) is at your service’” (*Munhujimyeong* No. 30), satisfying King Taejong also (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, July 18, 1416).

The above are good examples showing Chungnyeong Daegun accomplished his academic training. Not only King Taejong but also Seoyeongwan were jealous of the academic level of Chungnyeong Daegun. It became a matter of common knowledge that Seoyeongwan praised Chungnyeong Daegun at Seoyeon, inducing the Crown Prince to make strenuous efforts (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, September 7, 1416). Moreover, his knowledge did not stay only as learning but was used practically when the illness of his younger brother Seongnyeong Daegun became serious. When the illness of Seongnyeong Daegun became serious, they had I-ching tell fortunes and Chungnyeong Daegun explained the divination signs correctly. All the subjects including the Crown Prince admired him (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, January 26, 1418). When there was a problem with the heir and a sacrifice after Seongnyeong Daegun passed away Chungnyeong Daegun tried to refer various classics and find out similar examples together with Jo Mal-saeng (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, March 10, 1418). These instances can be said to show not only academic culture but also the character of Chungnyeong Daegun.

There are some more examples showing the character of King Sejong during his period of Daegaun. King Taejong took Chungnyeong as a man of decision to help the Crown Prince from the beginning (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, December 30, 1413) and the Crown Prince (Yangnyeong Daegun) also recognized Chungnyeong was not an ordinary person (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, October in the 14 year of King Taejong, October 26, 1414). The people of palace had already evaluated that Chungnyeong Daegun and Gyeongan, third daughter of Taejong, were the wisest among the sons and daughters of King Taejong (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, April 22, 1415). The wisdom and benevolence of Chungnyeong Daegun were well known both within and outside the palace to the point that some beggars who did not receive the relief of the poor asked Chungnyeong Daegun for subsistence. King Taejong was at a loss because Yusa was in charge of the relief of the poor. Therefore, King Taejong ordered to have the chief of Yusa investigated for not having taken care of the poor, thus confirming the benevolence of Chungnyeong Daegun to the people (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, November 6, 1415).

Chungnyeong Daegun showed outstanding aspects in learning and virtue. Even the Crown Prince and King Taejong that had already recognized Chungnyeong Daegun could not help but be ill at ease. When the Crown Prince was attired and asked those around him as to how he looked, Chungnyeong Daegun advised him “to control his mind first and then to attire himself afterwards,” which reportedly made King Taejong uncomfortable (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, January 9, 1416). The Crown Prince said “Chungnyeong is not brave” in front of King Taejong when discussing literary and military accomplishments is a good example confirming the Crown Prince felt ill at ease towards Chungnyeong Daegun (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, February 9, 1416). When Cheongpyeonggun Lee Baek-gang, a royal son-in-law wanted to take a female hostess (gisaeng) that he had kept as a concubine to a banquet hosted by the ex-king, Chungnyeong opposed, saying “How can such an act be proper as royal family?” The Crown Prince became angry but had no choice but to follow the appropriate advice of Chungnyeong. Afterwards, the Crown Prince came to have a dislike for Chungnyeong (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, March 20, 1416).

Afterwards, the advice of Chungnyeong Daegun towards the Crown Prince continued. After the Crown Prince went to Heungdeok Temple and offered incense in memory of the anniversary of the death of Queen Sinui he had a game of *baduk*. Chungnyeong Daegun indicated that playing *baduk* at anytime was wasteful, but further that playing *baduk* on the anniversary of a death was highly improper. The Crown Prince said to Chungnyeong Daegun, “Go to Gwaneumjeon and take a nap.” It can be known that the Crown Prince had a dislike for Chungnyeong Daegun (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, September 19, 1416). When the Crown Prince happened to meet Chungnyeong Daegun on the road, the Crown Prince inquired into the reason for Chungnyeong Daegun telling tales against former Jungchu Gwak Seon’s concubine Eori. This shows the relation between the two had seriously deteriorated (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, May 11, 1418). The continuous misbehavior of the Crown Prince was a problem when compared with the upright demeanor of Chungnyeong Daegun, which led to grave consequences in the reappointment of the Crown Prince.

During the changing of the Crown Prince in 1418, Chungnyeong Daegun was appointed as the new Crown Prince. This process could not have been a very easy political decision. Even though the Crown Prince continued his misbehavior, it was politically a very sensitive issue to depose and replace the Crown

Prince. The reason deposing and replacing the appointed Crown Prince with a new Crown Prince had to be reported to China. At the beginning of the newly established dynasty whose foundation needed to be fully established there was no guarantee that there would be no political tumult like a war of princes. Accordingly, King Taejong could not help being very prudent in reaching a very dangerous and serious decision.

The process of how King Taejong changed the Crown Prince has already been revealed. In the process, the subjects suggested three methods through which a decision about the new Crown Prince is to be made: to appoint the son of the existing Crown Prince, Taekyeon (to appoint the wisest prince), or Bokjeong (to entrust a prince with the position through a royal decree) (Choe Seung-hi 1990). King Taejong showed his indecision by trying out the three methods in turn, but he ultimately chose *taekhyeon* as the guideline for choosing the crown prince. The remarks of King Taejong on the criteria for choosing the new Crown Prince were as follows:

Chungnyeong Daegun is intelligent and sharp in character and is fond of learning. Whether very cold or hot, he is reading all night long. I am afraid he will fall ill, and I forbid him to read at night. But he asked me to lend him all the books in my possession. As he knows the fundamentals of government, his suggestion is very appropriate and, moreover, extraordinary at every important event. When treating a Chinese envoy, his demeanor, language, movements and kind offices were all proper to etiquette. Though drinking is not profitable, how can a host that cannot drink please the guest while treating a Chinese envoy? Even though Chungnyeong cannot drink well, he can control the amount of drinking. Also, he has wonderfully grown-up sons. Hyoryeong Daegun cannot drink even a drop at all; therefore, he is not suitable. Chungnyeong Daegun is worth coming to the throne. I'll appoint Chungnyeong as the Crown Prince (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, June 3, 1418).

What is important in the above statement of King Taejong is his indication that King Sejong received lessons as a prince so faithfully that no one could follow him. The ability of loving studies and administration was essential to the king. King Sejong cultivated these points as a prince very wonderfully, which could be the basis of the theory of *taekhyeon*.

2. Educational Contents in View of Royal Curriculum

Because King Sejong had been the Crown Prince only for two months, there was a limited curriculum and educational content to learn at Seoyeon. At the beginning of Seoyeon, the curricula Seoyeongwan asked for were the Four Books, which King Taejong accepted (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, June 10, 1418). Accordingly, it can be known that the Four Books were lectured at Seoyeon for two months. The Four Books are the most basic and fundamental classics in *seongnihak*. However, there was a limit to lecturing the Four Books at Seoyeon during two months. This essay will investigate the royal curricula at Seoyeon around the era of King Sejong and review educational contents King Sejong studied as the Crown Prince.

During King Taejo's era Jeong Do-jeon, Isa of the Crown Prince lectured the Works of Mencius at Seoyeon (*Veritable Records of King Taejo*, March 13, 1395). According to the suggestion of Maeng Sa-seong to the King during the King Jeongjong's era, *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* was lectured to King Jeongjong as the Crown Prince at Seoyeon (*Veritable Records of King Jeongjong*, November 13, 1400). In view of these facts, it can be known that during the era of King Taejo *The Works of Mencius and Ta-hsüeh yen-I* were the royal curriculum at Seoyeon.

There are few records on the royal curriculum at Seoyeon during the era of King Jeongjong. According to the articles of urgent affairs reported to King Taejong by the Office of Censor General, during the King Jeongjong's era King Taejong as the Crown Prince earnestly read *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* from Gyeokmul to Pyeongcheonha (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, June 18, 1402). During the King Taejong's era, *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* was repeatedly read at Seoyeon. King Taejong told Yangnyeong Daegun that he would have Yangnyeong Daegun lecture the book Yangnyeong Daegun was reading before practicing archery. Contrary to King Taejong's expectation, the Crown Prince did not answer the questions as to *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* faithfully (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, March 25, 1409).

King Taejong had the exemplary and admonishing contents of *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* abstracted and compiled because of the enormous volumes (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, September 4, 1409). *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* was accepted as a text at Seoyeon during the era of King Taejong. It took six years for the Crown Prince to read through *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* in October 1413 (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, October 7, 1413). In view of these facts it is known that *Ta-hsüeh yen-I*

was a very remarkable text at Seoyeon during the era of King Taejong. There are also records concerning Seoyeon during the era of King Taejong that besides *Ta-hsüeh yen-I the Book of Filial Piety* should be used as a text (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, June 18, 1402) and that Seoyeongwan selected some content from *the Records of the Deeds of Filial Piety* when making a folding screen (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, December 30, 1413).

A variety of curricula for royal education emerged at Seoyeon during the era of King Sejong. This was due to the fact that Munjong served as the Crown Prince for a long duration—30 years (he was appointed as Crown Prince in 1421)—as well as King Sejong making sure Crown Prince Munjong received thorough training from the start. According to the veritable records in 1438, the Crown Prince had already read the Four Books and the Five Classics of Confucianism including *Abridged Essentials of Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government* (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, March 19, 1438). King Sejong also had the Crown Prince learn Chinese pronunciation through *Jikhaesohak* and *Chunguijigeon*.

Besides, another remarkable text at Seoyeon during the era of King Sejong was *Sayak yojip* (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, October 5, 1446). King Sejong ordered the Hall of Worthies to compile all the royal orders and edicts from the Qin dynasty through the Han dynasty to the Ming dynasty. King Sejong also ordered Jeong In-ji, Academician of the Office of Royal Decrees to abstract the important content and published *Sayak jeonjip* (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, September 30, 1442). Accordingly, this book was directly profitable to national administration. During the era of King Sejong like the era of King Taejong, *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* was also a remarkable text. The Crown Prince who became King Munjong later ordered Seoyeongwan to attach particles in Korean to *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* and tried to teach an unlearned family through this book (*Veritable Records of King Munjong*, December 17, 1450).

The texts used at Seoyeon, the place of teaching the Crown Prince from the era of King Taejo to the era of King Sejong were *The Book of Filial Piety*, *The Book of Elementary Learning*, the Four Books, the Five Classics of Confucianism, *Abridged Essentials of Comprehensive Mirror for Aid in Government*, *Ta-hsüeh yen-I*, and *Sayak yojip*. This curriculum was respected equally at Gyeongyeon for the king (Nam Ji-dae 1980; Gwon Yeon-ung 1982). *The Book of Filial Piety* and *The Book of Elementary Learning* were the texts for the young Crown Prince.

Besides the basic Classics like the Four Books, the remarkable curriculum

included *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* and *Sayak yojip*. Among them, *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* was a typical text for the Kings that came from the influence of *seongnihak* in the Yuan dynasty at the end of the Goryeo dynasty. This book replaced *Jeonggwanjeongyo* noted by Goryeo before and was referred to remarkably in realizing the aspect of a Neo-Confucian sovereign composed of “Two Emperors and Three Kings.” *Seongnihak* puts emphasis on thorough academic training of the King under the structure of “a saint inside and a king outside,” intending for a benevolent king to rule through cultivation of the mind. This was supported by the system of Gyeongyeon. After all, the system of national administration was intended so that the King could entrust able subjects with concrete political affairs rather than enter in them directly.

Ta-hsüeh yen-I had a side to meet the demand of the times concerning the aspect of a Neo-Confucian sovereign. Jin Deok-su, a follower of Ju Hi combined the Classics of Confucianism with history to supply *seongnihak* after the death of Ju Hi in South Sung and completed the guideline for the aspect of a Neo-Confucian sovereign. *Seongnihak* became systematized, official learning and finally learning of the establishment through Yuan and Ming. Accordingly, the status of the king was elevated to a considerable degree in national administration. In the meantime, *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* had been continuously read because an element of “Honorable King” as a realistic sovereign was not lost (Jung Jae-Hoon 2005: 95-150).

The most remarkable book among the books published during the era of King Sejong was *Chipyongyoram* (Exemplar for Efficient Government) and *Jachitonggam gangmok hunui* was also published in relation to *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* (Jung Jae-Hoon 2003). *Exemplar for Efficient Government* was made as an example of *Jagyeongpyeon* during the Sung period and was supplemented by the area of governing a nation and making it peaceful neglected in *Ta-hsüeh yen-I*. In comparison with *Jagyeongpyeon* discussing the way of government from the point of view of the gentry rather than from the point of the king, *Chipyongyoram* (Exemplar for Efficient Government) suggested a standard a regal authority should pursue from the point of the king. *Jachitonggam gangmok hunui* was also used from the viewpoint of the study of a sovereign that private sector should be reduced to a minimum in political administration and suggested a certain standard to the king.

If the character of *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* was sufficient in keeping the image of a sovereign in mind and teaching a sovereign “political technique.” The atmosphere to read *Saryuyojip* was formed at Seoyeon during the era of King Sejong.

Conclusion

King Sejong was the third son of King Taejong and his eldest brother was the Crown Prince. In this situation, as there was only a faint possibility that he would succeed to the throne and he as the Crown Prince did not have enough time to prepare for the throne. Nevertheless, as he had a natural talent for learning, he was not attached to succession to the throne and could accomplish learning freely through the inquiry into a new study called *seongnihak*. He could not receive the full-fledged training as the Crown Prince in two months. But at the age of sixteen when he became the Crown Prince, he met Lee Su (1374-1430) who had faithfully accomplished *seongnihak* and could cultivate his accomplishments as a good scholar.

King Sejong laid the foundations for royal education of the Crown Prince during his reign. The system of the early Joseon dynasty began to be founded during the reign of King Taejong, organized during the reign of King Sejong, and revisions and supplementations made until the reign of King Seongjong. During the reign of King Sejong a systematic arrangement was made like the education provided to the Crown Prince that centered on the Hall of Worthies.

At Seoyeon for education of the Crown Prince, the books concerning *seongnihak* to replace the ruling principle of the Goryeo dynasty were selected as texts. As was shown similarly at Gyeongyeon for education of the King, primarily *the Book of Filial Piety* and *The Book of Elementary Learning* and next the Four Books, the central classics of *seongnihak* were also selected for the education of the Crown Prince. In the meantime, in order to accomplish statecraft by means of strong royal authority in the early Joseon dynasty, *Ta-hsüeh yen-I* written for the study for a sovereign and *Sayak yojip* that abstracted and compiled all the royal orders and edicts from the Qin dynasty China through the Han dynasty to the Ming dynasty were lectured. This basis for educating the Crown Prince was elaborately organized during the reign of King Sejong and the foundation was laid for later continuing the Royal Lecture Hall for the Crown Prince.

References

- Goryeosa* (History of Goryeo Dynasty)
Taejo sillok (Veritable Records of King Taejo)
Taejong sillok (Veritable Records of King Taejong)

Sejong sillok (Veritable Records of King Sejong)

Choe Seung-hi. 1966. “Jiphyeonjeon yeongu (sang)” (A Study on the Hall of Worthies, Part I). *Yeoksa hakbo* (The Historical Journal) 32. Seoul: Yeoksahakhoe.

———. 1990. “Taejongmal sejapyewi sakkeonui jeongchisajeok uiui” (The Political Significance of Deposing the Crown Prince at the End of King Taejong’s Reign). A collection of treatises in memory of the 60th anniversary of Dr. Lee Jae-ryong. Reprinted in *Joseonchogi jeongchisa yeongu* (A Study on Political History during the Early Joseon Dynasty). 2002. Seoul: Jisik Saneopsa.

Gwon Yeon-ung. 1982. “Sejongjoui gyeongyeongwa yuhak” (Gyeongyeon during King Sejong’s Reign and Confucianism). *Sejongmunhwa yeongu* Vol. 1 (A Study on Culture during King Sejong’s Reign Vol. 1).

Jung Jae-Hoon. 2003. “Sejongdae hakpunggwa jeongchisasang” (An Academic Tradition during the King Sejong’s Reign and Political Thought). *Aesan Academic Journal* 29.

———. 2005. *Joseonjeongi yugyo jeongchisasang yeongu* (A Study on Confucian Political Thought in Early Joseon). Seoul: Taehaksa.

Lee Seok-gyu. 1986. “Joseonchogi seoyeon yeongu” (A Study on Seoyeon in Early Joseon). *Yeoksa hakbo* (The Historical Journal) 110.

Lee Seong-mu. 1967. “Seonchoui sunggyungwan yeongu” (A Study of SungKyunKwan in Early Joseon). *Yeoksa hakbo* (The Historical Journal) 35-36.

Nam Ji-dae. 1980. “Joseonchogiui gyeongyeonjedo: Sejong-munjongnyeonganeul jungsimuiro” (The System of Gyeongyeon in Early Joseon: Centering on the Periods of King Sejong to King Munjong). *Hanguksaron* (The Theory of Korean History) 6. Seoul: Dept. of Korean History, Seoul National University.

Jung Jae-Hoon graduated from the Dept. of Korean History and the Graduate School of History at Seoul National University and later received a doctorate in literature. He is interested in the history of thought and cultural history. He is currently working as a researcher at the Institute for Korean Studies, GyuJanggak, Seoul National University.