

A Study of King Sejong's Statecraft: A New Look at the King Sejong Era based on the "Leadership Approach"

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This research project primarily aims to analyze and evaluate the process of King Sejong's statecraft in terms of each important political case based on a "leadership approach" to the King Sejong era. This study is expected to contribute to overcome and compensate for the limitations and problems of the existing studies of King Sejong, while clarifying the features of "Confucian statecraft" and paving the way for its conceptualization. This project aims to explore the whole process of statecraft in the Joseon period based on the spirit of "reviewing the old and learning the new"; put another way, this would be "getting better knowledge of the things that were unknown by examining and reflecting upon past experiences"—and ultimately aims to fulfill the tasks entrusted with Korean studies in the 21st century by creating a new paradigm of knowledge that contributes to the statecraft of contemporary Korea.

Keywords: Sejong's statecraft, leadership, Joseon dynasty, Confucian politics, Confucian statecraft

Introduction: Raising Questions

Yulgok Yi I had honored King Sejong as the "Sage-King of the East" (Yi I, "Socheom" 5). King Sejong is still been respected as the "Sage King Sejong" (Yi Seong-mu 2001: 76), and King Sejong's reign (1418-1450) has been considered to be "the most glorious era of Korean history" (Jeong Du-hui 1982: 3). His

statues are found not only on the grounds of almost every elementary school but also in public places such as the Deoksugung palace and Yeouido Park. A steady stream of worshippers visits the Yeongneung Tomb in which he is buried.

Despite the great fame he gained, we have only limited and fragmentary knowledge about King Sejong, such as “the great king who created han’geul (the Korean alphabet),” “a smart king who invented scientific devices such as the water watch, sun watch, and the rain gauge called *cheugugi*, etc. based on his advanced scientific knowledge,” or “a wise king who prevented the Jurchens’ invasion by establishing the Four Garrisons and the Six Fortresses on the northern border and ordered General Yi Jong-mu to conquer Daemado (Tsushima in Japanese) Island.” In addition, most of the existing studies of him are confined to the topics of his cultural politics¹ or focus on his character as an earnest scholar and man of fine character,² while almost no study is found to have made a systematic analysis of the process of his statecraft as the most prominent political leader of a dynasty.³ Even though there are some studies focusing on the political aspects of King Sejong’s reign, most of them focus not on Sejong himself but on the performance of his ministers or the neo-Confucian bureaucrats who surrounded him,⁴ or on his political ideas or philosophy.⁵ That is why despite the accumulated studies of the King Sejong era, there are hardly any studies that offer a dynamic illustration of the process by which King Sejong, as the highest

1. Examples of these are papers written by Jeong Du-hui (1982), Kim Jae-yeong (1998), and Yi Seong-mu (2001), all of which are edited by The Academy of Korean Studies.

2. For example, see Yi Sung-nyeong (1981) and Bak Jong-guk (1996).

3. Such a state of matter in the studies of the King Sejong era corresponds with the recent awareness of the academic community that it is strange that the studies of past kings are scanty even though the Joseon period was the history of dynasties. Dr. Shin Myeong-ho states in his book, *Joseon-ui wang* (Kings of Joseon, 1998), as follows: “While I studied the history of Joseon, I noticed that kings are completely neglected in the existing studies of Joseon. Kings are just treated as material for gossip or TV dramas, not as the objects of study or investigation.” However, Dr. Shin also did not attempt to examine what policies the Joseon kings made and implemented or how they managed the country, while portraying the education of kings, the king system, the court life of kings, the genealogy of kings, and the authorities of kings in his book. As for a study on King Sejong’s political leadership, Kim Jae-yeong explored the personal background for King Sejong’s political leadership as well as Sejong’s political ideas (Kim Jae-yeong 1998: 119-137). However, Kim did not attempt to analyze Sejong’s actual political activities and the process of his policy implementation. For the comments on Kim’s study, refer to the reviews of the paper written by Kim Ho-seong and Chung Yoon-Jae (Ibid., 139-146).

4. For example, Yi Seong-mu’s article on the King Sejong Era (2001).

5. For example, Jo Nam-uk’s book on the political philosophy of the Great King Sejong (2001).

political leader of the state, formulated and put into practice a variety of policies, thereby broadening our knowledge of the process of his statecraft.

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A "Leadership Approach" to King Sejong's Statecraft (1): Theoretical Background

Even though the monarchy was a predominant ruling system throughout the Joseon dynasty, there have been few studies of the Joseon kings' political acts and statecraft.⁸ Likewise, leadership in contemporary society and politics still remains "one of the most observed but least understood phenomena on earth" (Burns 1978). In this academic environment, politics has often been conceptualized as a "power struggle" or an "authoritative distribution of values for society," while politicians have been considered to be no more than "power-hungers" and as those "formulating and taking advantage of ideologies and policies only for

6. For the leadership approach to politics, see Chung Yoon-Jae (2003).

7. In the third year of King Jeongjo's reign, when Yi Yu-gyeong said that "*on-go jisin* means making an acquaintance of new writings by mastering old writings," Jeongjo replied saying, "many beginning scholars believe so, but it means getting better knowledge of the things that one did not know by finding new flavors in the process of delving into old writings."

8. Dramatist Shin Bong-seung emphasized the present significance of the "management mind" of the Joseon kings, insisting that "we should not underestimate the 500-year long Joseon dynasty, which overcame the numerous dilemmas and troubles both at home and abroad, such as Japanese and Chinese invasions of Joseon and internal power struggles among Confucian bureaucrats, and left splendid cultural heritages to us." See Shin Bong-seung (2002: 5).

the purpose of increasing their own individual benefits” (Chung 2003). As systematic approaches to political phenomena have been predominant in academic circles, political elites and leaders have been frequently considered as “insignificant parts” of a whole political system or as “political pygmies” under the influence of “social and economic giants.” Thus, the leadership exerted by them has not been given proper attention and has even been perceived in a negative perspective. This tendency to neglect the leadership of political leaders results in the unilateral categorization of various types of political leaders from developing countries in non-western areas as “development dictators,” thus failing to scientifically analyze and evaluate the diverse and dynamic processes of development and its results, which are brought about by qualitative differences in leadership (Paige 1977; Chung 2003).

Some scholars who note the importance of leadership phenomenon are emphasizing the importance of leadership analysis, criticizing that existing studies of leadership had been excessively centered on power analysis. Glenn D. Paige insists that present-day, US-centered political science has neglected the leadership phenomenon because it has been greatly influenced by the intellectual tradition of Europe that created evolutionary determinism, psychological determinism, and Marxist determinism, and argues for the necessity of a political analysis that considers the “creative potential” of political leaders. He characterizes political leadership as being defined by “salience, initiative, and interaction,” while suggesting the adoption of a “multivariate, multidimensional linkage approach,” which analyzes political leadership behaviors by considering them as a function of six factors: personality, role, organization, task, sense of values, and settings (Paige 1977). James M. Burns confesses that he had belonged to a “power school that analyzed the interrelationships of persons on the basis only of power,” and then he criticizes that existing studies in the field of political science give undue value to experimental and psychological analysis of politics based on access to power. He also notes that the tendency of “viewing politics as power had blinded us to the role of power in politics and hence to the pivotal role of leadership” (Burns 1978). According to him, although it is not deniable that there is such a thing as a “power phenomenon” in political and social life, “not all transactions among persons are mechanical, impersonal, ephemeral,” unlike relations between things, but the ones consisting of “mutual persuasion, exchange, elevation, and transformation.” Given this, it is more appropriate to make access to human relations not in terms of the concept of power but that of leadership. Above all, given that “the most powerful influence

consists of deeply human relationships," the "power approach" has great limitations, while the "leadership approach" combining a structural approach and the behavioral approach is a more efficient type of political method in terms of human relations (Burns 1978).

According to William A. Welsh, even though there are various theories on the unequal structure of power, political power is always wielded by the selected few, and for this reason a more important issue in politics and political analysis is not the unequal hierarchical structure of society itself but whether people belonging to the upper part of the social ladder are responsive to those in the lower part, and if so, how responsive they are. In a similar context, Welsh argues that central issues related to democracy in political theories do not concern themselves with the facts that a handful of political elites exist or that they exert a tremendous influence; rather, the matters of how much power they have to unite themselves and infiltrate into the mass, how responsible they are for the mass, and what kind of relationship they maintain with the mass come to seem more pertinent. He also notes that social scientists of the contemporary period fail to differentiate between "elites" and "leaders," thus confusing the former with the latter. He defines the "elites" or "eliteness" as a positional concept based on a "hierarchical position," whereas "leadership" is a "relational concept" in which the capacity to mobilize human resources in the process of pursuing a certain goal is essential. Based on these definitions he argues that in order to make research faithful to this concept of leadership, analytic concerns should be placed on the "patterns of interaction" between elites and elites, elites and non-elites, and elites and potential but socially inactive elites (Welsh 1979).

Robert C. Tucker offers the criticism that even though politics is supposed to exist for the pursuit of power, existing political research has so excessively focused on the "power-oriented analysis" that it has failed to produce significant knowledge about what the political leaders holding power are doing and what they are expected to do. He also points out that the theoretical context of this "power approach" was handed down from Machiavelli to Marx, Anthony Downs, J. S. Mills, and H. D. Lasswell. While admitting that politics is ambivalent in that it can be defined not only as "the pursuit and exercise of power in the interests of those who pursue and exercise it" but also as the "art of tending the flock," which is performed, for example, by a doctor or a shepherd, Tucker criticizes that the first definition of politics thus far has been excessively emphasized. He considers Plato a proponent of politics-as-leadership in that Plato stresses politics' function both as "an activity with utility" for the community

and as something “providing a direction for the people.” He asserts that political leadership as political behavior with a goal carries out three functions, namely as a “diagnosis” of problematic situations, “prescription” for the problem-solution, and “mobilization to gain the group’s support for the definition of the group situation that they have advanced and for the plan of action that they have prescribed.” And Tucker insists that political science should from now on get out of research methods focusing on power elites and turn its attention toward active analyses of social and political movements, as well as global problems that have been thus far neglected. According to Tucker, sociopolitical movements for change have served as a background for the appearance of a “non-constituted leadership,” which contrasts with so-called “constituted leadership,” while at the same time being led by “non-constituted leadership.” “Non-constituted leadership” is exerted when the constituted leadership cannot satisfactorily meet the various demands of the people or is not powerful enough to effect change. Tucker also insists that global problems should no longer be entrusted to nation states and their leaders, because they usually make wrong diagnoses of or ignore the real state of the global community only to provide makeshift measures to merely maintain the status quo. The only method to save humankind from the coming crisis is for it to have a “central guidance capability” to undertake global-level activities to save the Earth, with this depending on whether humankind succeeds in the development of “leadership of and for the whole” or not. And he believed that contemporary society could turn into a more peaceful and stable global community by establishing new leadership based on reasonable persuasions and practical activities through the cooperation of the United States and the Soviet Union (Tucker 1981).

Tsurutani Taketsugu was the first political scientist to make an approach to the concept of “political leadership” for the study of development of modern nations based on Japan’s experience of modernization and Machiavelli’s politics. He first offers the critique that many comparative political scientists are only engrossed in identifying and enumerating the variables related to political development or modernization in researching the development process of specific countries while neglecting the vital role of political leadership in the development process. He considers Italy in the 16th century and contemporary developing countries as sharing such common points as national disintegration without communities sharing the same interest, frequent change of political rulers, lack of harmonious relations between the people and the government, and absence of direction in state management. Therefore, for developing countries having such

accumulated tasks to solve, the political leader should not merely be a symbolic representative but should act as an “arbiter” who can take responsibility for the resolution of a variety of conflicts and problems. And this political leader should be charged with creating a political entity central to national stability and further with institutionalizing the order and stability secured by the presence of such an entity. For this purpose, political leaders should always take the initiative in everything and make an effort to formulate a political system corresponding to the traditional culture of the country. Since the presence of illegal violence in a political society in any case means that the political society itself has been corrupted and that the political leader of the society is not capable of leading the process of development, political leaders should make continuous efforts to minimize the possibility of violence (Tsurutani 1973).

The above discussions concerning “political leadership” can be summarized as follows. Politics cannot be considered a “power struggle.” For example, Plato insisted, even though he did not deny political rulers’ exercise of power, that they should present a direction to his people and deal with various tasks based on justice, and this was to him the essence of politics (Tucker 1981: 2-3). Confucius said that politics is to “go before the people with your example, and be laborious in their affairs” (先之, 勞之) (*The Analects* 13.1). And Zencius said that politics is “to illustrate illustrious virtue, to love the people, and to rest in the highest excellence,”⁹ emphasizing that the foremost principle by which a political leader should govern the nation was that of ruling by virtue by formulating and executing fair policies, which included always associating with neighboring elites and the grass roots and providing a proper and excellent vision for the nation’s future that anybody can agree to and follow.¹⁰ Whether a political system be democratic or authoritarian, “panopticon” or “synopticon” (Bauman 1998: 114-115), a nation’s political processes and the contents of policies can differ depending on the highest leader’s leadership. Even in countries with

9. 大學之道, 在明明德也, 在親民也, 在止於至善也。

10. I attempted to make an interpretation of the Confucian concept of politics following Kong Yingda’s interpretation of the concept, which is different from other existing interpretations of Zencius. I hope to provide a detailed explanation of Zencius’ concept of political leadership some day. When examined from the contemporary perspective of political leadership, the three principles of Zencius correspond to the “policies and programs of action, interaction between elites and people, and visions and goals,” which are conceived of as vital elements of the political leadership.

mature democratic systems, such as the United States, to say nothing of totalitarian countries, such as the Soviet Union, the result of government policy turns out to be different depending on the highest leader's leadership (Bunce 1981). Considering Black's theoretical prescription that minimization of violence would be possible if a traditional leadership converts to a leadership that pursues effective modernization (Black 1966), an approach to politics based on the concept of leadership is a proper and necessary research method. Given this, when we make an approach to King Sejong's statecraft based on the concept of "leadership," what and how should we analyze and evaluate? The following chapter includes analytical questions related to research methods and the elucidation of research objects.

A "Leadership Approach" to King Sejong's Statecraft (2): Methods and Objects of Analysis

An attempt to approach a political leader's statecraft based on the concept of leadership means analyzing and evaluating concrete aspects of state management under the political leader. Some methodological ideas have already been hinted when reviewing important research works of political leadership in the above chapters. Analytical questions and research objects consisting of the basic contents of leadership approach can be summarized as follows.

First, what kind of growth process and what kind of education lead a child to become a political leader when s/he grows up? Political leadership is not inborn but develops through a prolonged learning process, although there can be exceptions. Not everyone born of noble or royal blood becomes a successful leader. On the contrary, there are many cases in which a man of humble origin succeeds in leaving remarkable achievements in history through outstanding leadership. Thus far, Western social sciences have classified "personality types" and "leadership types" by making use of the outcomes of developmental psychology that follows from the theoretical premises of Freudian psychology.¹¹ In this respect, however, Abraham Maslow's theory of human motivation, according to which human needs or expectations vary according to growth stage, and Lawrence Kohlberg's theory of moral development are both expected to provide more use-

11. Representatives of this are Harold D. Lasswell, Victor E. Wolfenstein, and James D. Barber.

ful tips for leadership training. In addition to these theories, more recent theories in psychology that assert that birth order has great impact on leadership style also deserve reference. In old Far East Asia, the curriculum for the princes, which consisted of *Xiaoxue* (the Elementary Learning), *Lunyu* (The Analects of Confucius), *Mengzi* (The Book of Master Meng), *Daxue* (The Great Learning), and *Zhongyong* (The Doctrine of the Mean) aimed at Confucian self-cultivation of the princes and in itself constituted a training process towards state management leadership. Given this, analysis of a political leader's leadership should include the examination of his growth and education process. In democratic countries, unlike in monarchical ones, every member of the country is expected to exert leadership as a reasonable, responsible citizen, and thus each citizen is supposed to go through a process of leadership training, that is, the process of citizenship education in different social settings such as home, school, work, and so on. This is also the process in which the sense of citizenship necessary for the contemporary democratic society is formed and nurtured.

Secondly, what is the vision of a political leader? And how does a political leader justify his political visions or goals? A political leader carries out the task by his "words and deeds" (Chung 2003). Above all, he declares by his "words" what visions and goals he has for his "deeds" and why the policies he suggested are adopted and implemented. In modern politics, political leaders' thoughts or ideas have been negatively perceived as "ideologies," and the research trend based on behaviorism pursued the so-called "value-neutral scientific political knowledge" led even the political leaders' rational problematic consciousness, insights into reality, and visions for the future, which resulted from the will and goal to solve problems to be neglected or looked down upon (Dahl 1976: 115). However, if politics is a discipline that aims to help to solve political problems and provide prescriptions for the choice of policy decisions by comprehending and explaining the political phenomenon of the times rather than to "search for a permanent truth of universal validity" (Lee Hong Koo 1996: 97), it is necessary in political research to properly analyze and evaluate political leaders' "creative potential" manifested by their thought, vision, sense of value, will, and goals (Paige 1977). A political leader's vision can be examined either at the general level or in the process of adopting and implementing a specific policy. And whatever political structure a country may have, it can achieve modern development, or not, depending on the visions and decisions adopted by its political leader (Tsurutani 1973).¹²

Thirdly, how does a political leader recognize the problematic situation fac-

ing him and what kind of prescription does he apply to the situation (Tucker 1981)? Even though political leaders aim at the same visions or goals, the problematic situation in which they are placed and their perceptions and explanations of the situation may differ. When various problems coexist in the same situation, political leaders may focus on the same or different problems in their attempt to solve the problems. Each political leader's perceptions of the problems can vary depending on his vision and sense of value as well as the amount and kinds of information that he is given. In particular, when his vision includes a theory of development that receives the wide support of the people, he can have great influence. A political leader's diagnosis is linked to his prescription, while the content of the prescription itself can be decided upon according to the content and method of his diagnosis, just like different prescriptions may be issued according to the doctor's conception and theory of health, as well as his diagnosis of the patient's symptom (Chung 1988). And even the same diagnoses and prescriptions in theory can lead to success or not depending on the political leader's ability to decide and implement them.

Fourthly, what kind of relations keeps the political leader with both the elites and the general population in the process of solving problems? As the political process as a leadership process consists of the interaction between the political leader and the members of the nation, the leadership phenomenon is always "collective" (Burns 1978). The leadership phenomenon, unlike the function of elites, is created in the process in which a leader socially and politically interacts with the human environment surrounding him, not being an isolated phenomenon limited to a specific social status or hierarchical order. That is why a political leader cannot help engaging in a process of interaction with followers (Paige 1977). Whatever good policies and visions a political leader may have, he cannot achieve successful governance without keeping in tune with the elites and the grass roots. When a political leader or a potential political leader, whether he is an elite or not, actively performs the role of solving the problems of the community or of relieving their suffering through his interaction with them, he can exert his leadership and at the same time induce followership. Therefore, when we examine the process of political leadership, we have to focus on what rela-

12. For example, King Wangchuck of the Kingdom of Bhutan is pushing forward amendments to the Constitution in order to change its 100-year-long absolute monarchy to parliamentary democracy (*Choson ilbo*, March 3, 2005).

tions a specific political leader sustains with the elites surrounding him as well as how he responds to the elites critical of or hostile to him. Besides these, a normal study of political leadership needs to examine what kind of relationship a political leader formulates with the general population, and how he responds to their collective or structural needs. These questions are useful for examining how (either democratically or coercively) a political leader creates and utilizes the followership of the elites and the general population while at the same time dealing with the capacity of "dominance," which is a basic condition for effective leadership as well as the process of policy implementation and methods of building a public moral consensus (Tsurutani 1973).

Fifth, in what manner does a political leader implement the adopted policies, and what does he do in order to arouse, organize, and mobilize the support of community members? When we define the role of a political leader as "direction, division of labor and delegation, and monitoring and drive," it is necessary to examine how political leaders entrust followers with duties and rights (or not), how they carry out field surveys in the process of policy implementation, and how they cope with the problems identified by the surveys. Heo Jo's statement in *Sejong sillok* (Veritable Records of King Sejong, 1-178) shows us that King Sejong was entirely agreeable to the division of labor and delegation.¹³ Given this, we cannot say that only democratic states have or had the principle of division of labor and delegation. A political leader, unlike a political scientist who is required to be faithful to the formulation of theories and learning process, is expected to play the role of solving various practical problems within a political community. That is why political leaders always need to develop a "sense of reality" (Berlin 1995) and to administer the state with "intelligence and skills" (Tsurutani 1973) facing up to reality and field.

Sixth, what are the results of the implementation of a specific policy and his own and others' evaluations of the results? And what is the evaluation of the

13. In the first lunar month of the first year of King Sejong's reign, when Kim Jeom, Councilor of the State Council insisted in the presence of King Sejong that the King should take care of all state affairs in person, like the Chinese emperors, Heo Jo, Minister of Rites, answered back, saying, "Not all Chinese rules are acceptable. For example, the King should entrust the task of dealing with prisoners to the official in charge, and once the King entrusts him with the task, the King should not suspect him." King Sejong took sides with Heo Jo, adopting his opinion. Refer to *Sejong jangheon daewang sillok* (Veritable Records of the Great King Sejong Jangheon), p. 178.

researchers of the political leader's achievements? When a specific political leader's leadership process is analyzed through such questions, his entourages' evaluation of him should also be included (Paige 1977). The researcher himself should be able to provide his own evaluative opinion on a specific policy of a specific leader who is the object of research in consideration of his political and historical views as well as the theoretical perspective. Of course, this analysis and evaluation needs to expand to analyzing the person who is the object of research as well as to exploring the implications that statecraft in the period when the person acted as a leader has for contemporary societies.

The above analytical questions will be utilized for taking an in-depth look at how each division of government in the King Sejong era formulated, enforced, and implemented its own policies in its internal and external relations with the Joseon court headed by King Sejong. The main subjects of the analysis are as follows:

- (1) The basis of King Sejong's statecraft: His growth and education
- (2) Buddhism and Confucianism in King Sejong's statecraft: Tension between and integration of religious beliefs and politics
- (3) King Sejong's statecraft for the people: Focusing on the creation of the Hunmin Jeongeum (Proper Sounds for the Instruction of the People)
- (4) King Sejong's statecraft based on the principle of *siin baljeong* (to "practice virtue and govern the nation"): Focusing on the stable employment measures for the magistrates
- (5) King Sejong's Confucian statecraft: Focusing on rites and music
- (6) King Sejong's statecraft based on public opinion: Focusing on the process of introducing the Tribute Tax Law
- (7) King Sejong's statecraft pursuing the diplomatic principle of "serving the great and keeping friendship among neighboring countries": Focusing on the process of conquering Daema (Jan. Tsushima) Island
- (8) King Sejong's benevolent politics and laws: Focusing on the criminal sentence system
- (9) A fresh look at science and technology in the King Sejong era: Reexamination of independence

Conclusion: Significance and Implications

The participants in this research project explored the political contexts in the King Sejong era by analyzing and evaluating the process of statecraft by each

division of King Sejong's government through a "leadership approach." In other words, criticizing the major trends of the existing studies of the Joseon period for their lack of political analysis of the period centering on the role of kings even though Joseon was a society ruled by a dynasty, namely the Yi dynasty, this research attempted to correct such deficiency by carrying out king-centered analyses of the political process relating to the formulation and implementation of concrete policies. The results of this research, at least, produced the following three useful observations.

First, based on new knowledge produced through an internal approach to the Joseon dynasty, this research would be able to contribute to changing the existing negative perception and evaluation of the dynasty and further analyzing the causes for the long duration of the dynasty. Since the Japanese colonization of Joseon, the Joseon dynasty, which was a period of Confucian politics, has been generally considered as having had excellent culture but poor politics. Such perceptions and evaluations of the Joseon dynasty originate from critical examinations of the dynasty that were carried out by certain Korean nationalist historians such as Sin Chae-ho and Bak Eun-sik after its fall. However, during the Japanese occupation, this degenerated into a stagnant view of history, which concluded that the Korean nation and its history had uncorrectable political limitations. However, when we note that the Joseon dynasty was the only Confucian dynasty that persisted for more than 500 years in the history of East Asia, we need to carry out a new analysis and evaluation of the causes for its long survival in terms of the international environment surrounding the dynasty as well as its political thought, culture, and statecraft. In this respect, it is expected that this study on King Sejong's statecraft would pave the way for the exploration of the causes for the long existence of the Joseon dynasty.

Secondly, statecraft "for the people" in the Joseon dynasty may serve as a useful model for the management of contemporary democratic countries because they are supposed to be managed based on not only the principles of "of the people and by the people," but also the principle of "for the people." However, democracy, which spread worldwide after World War II, was so inclined to the principles of "of the people and by the people" as to neglect the importance of the responsibilities and authorities of the government and government officials as well as of the effective management of state affairs in compliance with the principle of "for the people" (Zakaria 2003). A study of Confucian thought, which can be dubbed as a political theory of "cultivating oneself and governing others" (修己治人) and of the statecraft in Joseon dynasty as a practical example of such the-

ory is expected to contribute to the reform and education of public leadership to compensate for the limitations of contemporary democracy.

Thirdly, this study ultimately will be able to provide useful resources for the conceptualization of “Confucian statecraft.” Studies of Confucian politics or Confucian statecraft have thus far been carried out primarily in a manner of reading and interpreting the Confucian classics, while the processes of practical efforts to create an ideal Confucian society, such as King Sejong’s statecraft, have hardly been analyzed. In the cases when there were analyses of concrete political processes, most focused on “factional strife” or “power struggle,” and failed to cover the general aspects of Confucian politics. If cases of the practice of Confucian politics, such as King Sejong’s statecraft, are constantly researched and the results steadily accumulated, this will successfully lead to the conceptualization of Confucian statecraft based on the studies of the cases of Joseon’s statecraft as well as to the creation of model cases of Confucian statecraft.

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