

The Role of King Sejong in Establishing the Confucian Ritual Code

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This paper reviews the political leadership of King Sejong the Great in the process of establishing ritual codes such as the Five Ritual Codes for royal families and *Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* (朱子家禮). A Confucian nation is the place where a benevolent king of virtue governs a country according to Confucian principles. Among the Five Ritual Codes for royal families, *gilje* (吉禮, worship for heaven, earth, famous mountains, and long rivers in the country) is the most important rite as an agricultural society. However, worship for heaven should be solely conducted by the emperor according to the Confucian ritual code, *Record of Rites* (禮記). Therefore, King Sejong has replaced worship for heaven by worship for goddess of earth and crops (社稷, *sajik*) in praying for rain. *Binrye* (賓禮) is a rite in foreign diplomatic policy and ritual ceremony in hosting diplomatic delegates. The Joseon dynasty also sent tributes to China to show due respect as a stronger nation. In military rites (軍禮), practicing military arts (講武, *gangmu*) was conducted twice a year, once in spring and once in autumn in the form of hunting. However, practicing military arts also disturbed the agricultural produce from farmers to a in the countryside. King Sejong temporarily reduced the scale and numbers concerning practicing of military arts so as to mitigate the pains of farmers during the season. *Chigangnyeong* (吹角令) is an order that organizes military personnel in an emergency. While *Chigangnyeong* was misused sometimes, a lot of people were uncomfortable and afraid of being implicated in treachery. King Sejong mitigated a controversial article of *Chigangnyeong* saying that if military personnel concerned gathered together without specific reasons, they would be accused of treachery. Finally, King Sejong opened up the era of peace after several violent revolutions at the beginning of the dynasty.

The Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions concerning the coming-of-age, wedding, funeral, and worship for ancestors, ceremonies for ordinary people were introduced by new Confucian scholars from the very beginning. It was not eas-

ily adopted as far as cultural change from Buddhism which existed for several hundred years in the Goryeo dynasty to Confucianism was concerned. In particular, a wedding ceremony was difficult to change because in the Goryeo dynasty a bridegroom usually resided with the bride's family. According to the Confucian rite, the most important procedure is the Chinyeongnye (親迎禮), when on the day of the wedding, the bridegroom visited the home of the bride and then brought her to his home for a ceremony. This reflects that *yang* moves first and then *yin* follows in line with the theory of *yin* and *yang* in Taoism. King Sejong himself practiced Chinyeongnye in the wedding ceremony of Princess Sooksin. He induced Confucian scholars in power to construct a family shrine at the house of the first son of the family lineage utilizing an incentive and punitive approaches.

In conclusion, King Sejong was a prominent leader with a sense of balance and harmony between worship for the powerful and the sovereign that was shown by a concern for moral duty, actual profit, the ideal, and reality. In addition, he was enough of a good leader to be compared with Emperors Yao and Shun in ancient China while he accomplished the Five Ritual Codes for royal families and propagated *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* not only for Confucian scholars but also for the benefit of ordinary people throughout the country.

Keywords: *the Five Ritual Codes for Royal Families, Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions, Chinyeongnye, goddess of Earth and Grains, worship of heaven, military arts*

Introduction

At the end of the Goryeo dynasty, the new gentry established the Joseon dynasty through a “surname-change revolution” and adopted Neo-Confucianism as the ruling ideology. A Confucian state is a society where the king makes it a principle to rule the people through perfect virtue while the people serve the king through Confucian rules and orders. A society that is well established according to Confucian rules and has a ruling king of virtue who has attained the way of Heaven and can be called the ideal society that the Confucian state intends to attain (Park Chung-seok 1980). The concrete ideal society the Confucian state intends to accomplish is the Society of Great Unity¹ as prescribed in *The Book*

1. A Society of Great Unity means that “the world is a public one...one doesn't accumulate private

of Rites and *The Evolution of Li*. In this ideal society, a Society of Great Unity was the product of historical and legendary society only truly existing as a dreamt-of Utopia. Confucius himself lamented, “A great cause has collapsed.” So, Confucius proposed a Society of Small Tranquility as the second best and realistic society. That is, Confucius proposed “...the society that makes the relation between the sovereign and subject righteous, the relation between parents and children sincere, the relation among brothers intimate and the relationship between husband and wife harmonious...by establishing rituals and making them the foundations of the country.” A society well established by ritual orders is the very Society of Small Tranquility.

King Taejong suffered from unstable political situations, such as the Princes’ Revolt twice at the beginning of the dynasty. As a result he eliminated the brothers-in-law who had rendered special services helping him come to the throne to strengthen royal authority. According to the theory of selecting the most virtuous, King Taejong deposed Yangnyeong Daegun as Crown Prince because of his immoral conduct and appointed his third son, Chungnyeong Daegun, as Crown Prince who later became King Sejong the Great. The thirty-two years of the reign of King Sejong following the founding periods of the dynasty by King Taejo, King Jeongjong, and King Taejong was the golden age of peaceful reign that culturally bloomed in Korean history (Lee Han-wu 2003). The following questions are to be answered in order to evaluate the era of King Sejong as a peaceful reign. Was King Sejong really a virtuous sovereign? Did his achievements meet the purpose of establishing ritual orders? The answer these questions proves that King Sejong is worthy as a sage ruler with a developing culture grounded fully in the Confucian society of the Joseon dynasty. The answers to resolve these two questions will be the focus of this article.

Who Was King Sejong?²

Before answering whether King Sejong was a virtuous sovereign requires a review first of what the essence of virtue is. It is all the more important because

property only for oneself...everyone can live comfortably with the door open without thieves and rioters.”

2. The character of a leader can be a mechanism to explain and analyze his political leadership (Chung Yoon-Jae 2003: 34).

the duty of a sovereign when ruling a country is to practice virtues (Chapter 1 *the Great Learning*). Abstract virtues in concrete subdivisions in Confucian society are revealed in; sincerity (*seong*) or respect (*gyeong*) including the five constant virtues like benevolence (*in*), righteousness (*ui*), propriety (*ye*), wisdom (*ji*) and belief (*sin*), in parental love, in filial piety of sons and daughters, in the goodness of an elder brother, in the respect of a younger brother, in the righteousness of a husband, the obedience of a wife, the favors of a senior, the compliance of a junior, the benevolence of a king, and in the loyalty of subjects. They are also expressed in *The Five Cardinal Principles of Morality* by Mencius; parent-adolescent affective bonding (*chin*), sovereign-subject justice (*ui*), husband-wife division (*byeol*), senior-junior order (*seo*), and friend-friend belief (*sin*) (Jo Nam-uk 1998: 18). It is not difficult to connect the “benevolent mind” Confucians emphasize greatly with a virtue.

When Chungnyeong Daegun was appointed as the Crown Prince, King Taejong and many chancellors had already evaluated him as benevolent. According to the recommendations of subjects based on the Theory of Selecting the Wisest,³ King Sejong was appointed as the Crown Prince instead of his elder brother Hyoryeong Daegun that led to the throne. Benevolent King Sejong expressed his firm decision to practice virtues and rule the country in his inauguration speech (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, August 11, 1419). According to Confucius benevolence is the core of Confucianism.

If men are not benevolent, what is the use of practicing propriety? If men are not benevolent, what is the use of playing music?

However, it cannot be said that only benevolence would be enough for a king. Another reason King Taejong chose Chungnyeong Daegun as the Crown Prince was his fondness of learning.

Chungnyeong Daegun is intelligent in nature and has never been idle in learning...and is a man of political insight. Whenever there is a nationwide incident, he always ventures an opinion. His extraordinary opinion

3. There was an ancient event King Mun of Chou in China appointed his second son as King Mu instead of his eldest son, Baekeubgo because he was very wise. This is a theory to select the wisest as the king regardless of order.

is unexpectedly excellent... (A series of the 1st year of King Sejong)

The fact that the fondness of learning was an indispensable quality to be a saint sovereign is clearly shown in the reason Yangnyeong Daegun was deposed as Crown Prince “because he was not fond of learning but was indulged in music and love affairs.” King Sejong was told by King Taejong, “You have nothing to do in particular and enjoy your life comfortably” during his days as a Daegun (royal prince). He applied himself to calligraphy, *gayageum* and *geomungo* and became an expert in the arts (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, December, 30, 1413). This shows King Sejong had also a conspicuous talent for arts. Although it was customary for Daegun not to be indulged in learning, Chungnyeong Daegun was absorbed in learning, which proves that he had possibly a great ambition in addition to his benevolent character (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, December 30, 1414).⁴ Because King Sejong had been already appointed as the Crown Prince and succeeded to the throne, everyone around King Sejong praised him as a saint sovereign. This was also shown very precisely in a royal message of the emperor of the Ming dynasty who ratified King Sejong.

To rule a country is to practice benevolence broadly and compassionate virtue is the model of a country...to choose a wise and virtuous man and let him rule the country...the third son is filial, obedient, indulged in learning, becomes hope of the people and succeeds to the throne...without virtues, the duty of a country cannot be accomplished. Only loyalty can serve the sovereign, only filial piety can serve parents, only modesty and indulgence can build a body, only humanity and affection can protect the people. (January 13, 1418)

It can be known that King Sejong had the quality of a virtuous sovereign such Confucian virtues as benevolence, fondness of learning, filial piety, friendship, gentleness and submission, indulgence, humanity and affection.

In the meantime, soon after his enthronement, King Sejong watched the col-

4. Uiryong Buwongun Nam Jae (1351-1419), king’s father-in-law, said to King Taejong in front of Chungnyeong Daegun, “If any son of a king is fond of learning, why can’t he become a king?” This anecdote suggesting learning to King Taejong enables us to imagine many things. The ambition of King Sejong when he was the Crown Prince will be reviewed in another chapter.

lapse of his wife's family silently from the beginning to the end. His father-in-law committed suicide of Sim On over the problem of military power. It is necessary to review how deeply the incident influenced the character and statecraft of King Sejong.

Immediately after his enthronement, King Sejong first read *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I*⁵ by Jin Deok-su from October. That October coincided with the period of the second handling of major crimes of Gang Sang-in involved by Sim On, the father-in-law of King Sejong. King Taejong following King Taejo and King Jeongjong earnestly read a classic on the study on sovereign (*Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I*) and had the Crown Prince, Yangnyeong Daegun read it. King Taejong also made an abridged book of *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I* and made the subjects, wives of royal family, and eunuchs learn it. This book was on how human relations should behave harmoniously among subjects, eunuchs, queens, royal concubines, relatives of the king, and kinsfolk. It also contained examples resulting from disharmonious behaviors. Yangnyeong Daegun incurred the hatred of his father early because he incorrectly learned *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I* (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, September 4, 1409).⁶ Although King Sejong succeeded to the throne, he spent the first three years in apprenticeship as a deputy because his father, King Taejong still held military power. The unfortunate incident that happened during this apprenticeship was the "handling of the major crime of Gang Sang-in."⁷ The native home of Queen Sim was involved in this incident and suffered a disaster that eliminated the whole family. The father-in-law Sim On killed himself, the mother-in-law became a slave in the government department, her uncle was executed, and family property was confiscated. Although everyone praised King

5. Refer to Jo Nam-uk (2005) on *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I*.

6. King Taejong became furious with Kim Gwa, Yangnyeong Daegun's instructor because Kim Gwa had not taught Yangnyeong Daegun how to treat maternal relatives of the Crown Prince properly but had first taught him the examples of power struggles among parents, brothers and sons.

7. In fact, the incident of the handling of Gang Sang-in's major crime was nothing more than the incident some high officials of the Ministry of Defense including the Minister Gang Sang-in complained that it would be convenient administratively for military power to be concentrated in the hands of the King. This incident was extended to a plot of treason and they were executed in the handling of the major crimes. Because King Taejong had joined in three plots of treason since the beginning of the foundation of a country, it would be difficult for him to avoid the judgment that he overprotected himself. His excessive worry over a plot of treason can be seen in the rewards for an accuser of a plot of treason, 200 land-unit (*gyeol*) of patch and 20 slaves in comparison with a patch of 150 land-unit and 13 slaves given to the first-class vassal of merit (Choe Seung-hi 2002: 68).

Sejong as a saint sovereign, he was worth being suspected as a decisive man because he did not ask for mercy for his father King Taejong for the benefit of his beloved queen. Such a negative evaluation can be lessened to a certain degree seeing that King Sejong controlled his mind by reading *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I* after the suicide of his father-in-law Sim On. His father-in-law Sim On had been dispatched to China as an ambassador of gratitude when the incident of Gang Sang-in occurred November 13th for the second time. On November 25th, Sim Cheong, the younger brother of Sim On reluctantly admitted the involvement of his brother through torture and Gang Sang-in, Park Seup, Lee Gwan and Sim Cheong were executed that day according to the petition of Park Eun. At Gyeongyeon where King Sejong was reading *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I* on November 29th, he uttered significant words comparing Park Eun⁸ with a “flattering subject” (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, November 29, 1418). Sim On was arrested on the way home from China, brought to the Correctional Tribunal on December 22nd, ordered to commit suicide by King Taejong on December 23rd and killed himself at Suwon two days later. The following historical material enables us to glimpse at the miserable feelings of King Sejong who watched his father-in-law commit suicide.

Every instructor above a winter solstice embassy was absent from Gyeongyeon because of some problems. No lecture for the day was asked but the King ordered Yun Hoe to come and read *Ta-Hsueh Yen-I*. When Yun Hoe orated a memorial to the Throne Wang Gil had sent up to King Changeup, King Sejong said, “However desperately a wild animal may escape, a hunter never fails to catch it. How foolish the wild animal is running toward dangerous places without thinking it may fall and die!” (January 9, 1418)

It is a nonsense that the subjects were absent from Gyeongyeon the King himself attended under the pretext of private affairs. The subjects that had assumed the attitude of onlookers in the suicide of the father-in-law of the King must have lost face and have been sorry for meeting the King face to face. Nevertheless, King Sejong had Yun Hoe come and read *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I*. The sorrow of King Sejong was only overcome by reading *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I* and is outspokenly

8. Park Eun died a day before King Taejong passed away.

revealed. It is a heartbreaking comparison: Who is a hunter? Who is a wild animal? To control his mind, King Sejong said after the first reading of *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I*, “I’ll read it again in detail.” “I have finished reading it but I want to read it again.” King Sejong must have begun to read *Ta-Hsüeh Yen-I* for the second time out of necessity of “the study of mind” (Jo Nam-uk 2005, P.9). King Sejong who had watched King Taejong treat the kinsfolk of his wife must have been a realist who kept silent because he thought protecting the family his wife would not be of benefit. He was a man of reserve who did not easily reveal his mind. By overcoming the tragedy of the family of his wife including the suicide of Sim On inconspicuously, King Sejong must have attained the mature posture of a leader to understand the standpoint of the weak, see things from another perspective and pay special attention that there might be no unjust handling of the major crimes. King Sejong was a realist who behaved according to cool-headed circumstantial judgment and would have been typically been gentle in appearance but sturdy in spirit. One of the most urgent businesses of King Sejong as a sovereign during the period of keeping the country⁹ must have been to enact and arrange the system of rites. This will be reviewed in the following passages.

The Arrangement of the Five Principal Rites

The foundation of the Joseon dynasty by destroying the Goryeo dynasty and establishing a new dynasty was not simply the substitution of surname of royal family from Wang to Lee and political power but also the change from a Buddhist culture to a Confucian one in a change into a better customs and environment. King Taejo, Lee Seong-gye declared the inaugural message twelve days after his enthronement. Among seventeen articles of the inaugural message,¹⁰ there contained a considerable amount of content to construct a Confucian society. They were the completion of the Royal Ancestral Shrine and the system of guardian deities of the State, the arrangement of the Korean Customs of Ceremonial Occasions and official commendation for loyal subjects,

9. Byeon Gye-ryang regarded the periods of King Taejo, King Jeongjong and King Taejong as an era of founding the dynasty and the period of King Sejong as an era of keeping the dynasty. But Gwon Geun took the period since King Taejong as an era of keeping the dynasty.

10. Jeong Do-jeon wrote seventeen articles of *Pyeonminsamok* and declared it in king’s order (Han Yeong-u 1999: 54).

filial sons, honorable husbands, and chaste wives.

To create the political aims of the Joseon dynasty with Confucianism as an ideology of the state, it was concluded that the concrete system of order would be the five principal rites. The arrangement of the five principal rites during the period of King Sejong can be called to have actualized confidently the political ideology of the Joseon dynasty (Lee Beom-jik 1988: 135). It can be seen that the five principal rites for the king and *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* for the gentry and the common people were pursued from the beginning of the foundation of the dynasty. Of the five principal rites, *gilye* are the national ceremonies for such as guardian deities of the State of the Royal Ancestral Shrine, mountains, rivers, praying for rain, the first father of agriculture, regular ceremonies for sacrifices of the bureaucrats, and the common people. *Hyungye* are the rites for national mourning and funerals, *Gunye* for going to war and withdrawing of troops, *binrye* for receiving foreign envoys and *garye* for worship of the dominance of China, procedures for court ceremonies, and national marriages.

The five principal rites were a partial system in *zhou li* (Lee Beom-jik 1990: 32) and were developed and transformed through many dynasties in Chinese history. As the five principal rites were a theory to strengthen royal authority, they were accepted, arranged and transformed through the Goryeo and Joseon dynasty. The Goryeo dynasty accepted the Ceremony in Kaiyuan of Tang as a model, a round altar, the ritual paddies, and guardian deities of the State were newly constructed during the reign of King Seongjong the Confucian political foundations were being laid, and the rites were proposed and the rules for sacrifices were fixed during the reign of Injong (Han U-geun 2001: 18). The rite for a heavenly sacrifice at a round altar in the Goryeo dynasty can be called a combination of the one-thousand-year-long heavenly ceremony since Goguryeo and Confucian rites, a round altar sacrifice of China.¹¹ There were no records of a heavenly sacrifice at a round altar for some time after the reigns of King Seongjong, King Yejong and King Injong but frequent heavenly rites came back during the reigns of King Chungryeol, King Chungseon, King Chungsuk and King Gongmin of the Mongolian intervention period in the end of the Goryeo dynasty (Han Yeong-u 1983: 33).

11. Lee Beom-jik viewed a round altar sacrifice as political originality of Goryeo equivalent to that of China. Han U-geun viewed it as a combination of our traditional rite and Confucian culture and was supported by Kim Hae-yeong.

The gentry that became a political group to put a will of innovation into action for academic desire and political stability as a status of learned people based on the minor land-owning classes socio-economically in the Joseon dynasty came to widen the world-view according to the spectrum of the enlarged knowledge. They thought that the king of Joseon dynasty should take the position of king as a feudal lord different from an emperor of China in the belief that the status of royal authority should be established in world history including China. First of all, this thought was realized in arranging the rules of sacrifice and destroying the system of round altar sacrifice. On the basis that an emperor should make sacrifices to heaven and earth and famous mountains and rivers in the world, a feudal lord to guardian deities of the State and famous mountains and rivers within the boundary and the gentry according to the five sacrificial rites (Ritual System of the *Book of Rites*), an officer of the Ministry of Rites Jo Bak and others suggested, “The system of round altar sacrifice should be abolished because it is the sacrificial rite of an emperor to the heaven” (*Veritable Records of King Taejo*, August 11, 1392) and, therefore, the system was abolished. However, because praying for rain and grains was directly connected with the success or failure of the state in an agricultural state Joseon dynasty, the name *wongu* (round altar sacrifice) was changed into *wondan* and the system was restored.

Since the Three Kingdoms period, our orient has been long making sacrifices to heaven at a round altar and praying for rain and grains. Because we can't think light of making sacrifices to heaven at a round altar, the name should be changed into *wondan*, restored and listed in the rules of rites. (*Veritable Records of King Taejo*, August 21, 1394)

Thus, the restored *wondan* sacrifice was performed at *wondan* in January the 6th year of King Taejong when the capital was moved to Hanyang, again to Gaegyeong and then to Hanyang (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, January 10, 1406). It is known that sacrifices to heaven were performed, judging from historical data like funeral addresses to the Supreme God and Five Emperors (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, June 25, 1410). Afterwards, the sacrifices praying for rain to the god of wind, cloud, thunder and rain were performed (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, May 18, 1411). As there were sometimes dominant opinions, “No one except an emperor can make sacrifices to heaven,” sacrifices to only deities of fine weather among Five Emperors were made from

time to time (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, October 27, 1411). Moreover, the procedure of rites as a feudal country was asked to the Ministry of Rites of Ming (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, November 7, 1411). Once, there was an anxiety about inundation and drought unless sacrifices were made at wondan. As praying for rain was of no use (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, August 24, 1412), King Taejong regarded the cause of inundation and drought as all his faults and abolished the sacrifices at wondan (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, July 5, 1413). Instead, according to the records of Survey of Documents (*Munheontonggo*) that “An emperor prays for rain to the Supreme God and feudal lords to superior lords,” King Taejong ordered to construct an altar for praying for rain at an eastern outskirt and make sacrifices to six positions of a deity of awns and beard, a deity of stable, a person who prays for unity, a deity of darkness, goddess of earth and goddess of grains instead of the Supreme God and Five Emperors (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, May 14 and 18, 1414). Although sacrifices were made at *wondan* during the reign of King Taejong, King Taejong himself did not join in the sacrifices. It is known that sacrifices for praying for rain were made not to heaven but to the other deity. Several years later, after a long drought Byeon Gye-ryang suggested praying for rain at *wondan* but King Taejong flatly refused the suggestion.

“An emperor makes sacrifices to heaven and earth and feudal lords to mountains and rivers within their boundary. I know only this rite and make sacrifices to mountains and rivers within my boundary. I dare not wish for the rite for making sacrifices to heaven. (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, December 4, 1417)

Among five sons born by the first wife of Taejo Lee Seong-gye, King Taejong alone passed the civil service examination at the age of sixteen and entered into government service as Miljiksadaejon. King Taejong had such a great store of Confucian culture that he had been to Ming as a temporary scrivener attached to an envoy at the age of twenty-two in 1388 (Han Yeong-u 1999: 51). King Taejong who considered the Joseon dynasty a land of feudal lords and had asked the Ministry of Rites of Ming what were the rites of the feudal land answered properly as above. King Taejong who had been to Ming as a royal prince according to the order of King Taejo to receive ratification concerning his half brother Bang-seok being appointed as the Crown Prince knew how large the suzerain state of Confucianism China was and what the emperor was. King

Taejong took a refined step toward a Confucian state and was a distinguished politician expert in international politics. Gilye among the five principal rites had been already arranged during the reign of King Taejong.

At the turn of the King Sejong period, it became resolute that it was improper for a feudal state to make sacrifices to heaven. When a severe drought came at the beginning of the inauguration of King Sejong, Byeon Gye-ryang once again suggested a sacrifice to heaven at *wondan* but King Sejong refused it to keep his place as a feudal lord.

Traditionally, it is true that it is improper for a feudal lord to make sacrifices to heaven. How can I perform such a rite of an emperor even though I am so far away? (June 1, 1418)

King Sejong took an attitude compliant to the principles his father King Taejong had defined. Of course, his attitude derived from a Confucian virtue not to despise parental orders and his honesty. However, Byeon Gye-ryang consistently suggested, “On the Gisu (Stream), there is a place to make sacrifices to heaven and to pray for rain ...What is wrong performing sacrifices to heaven to break a severe drought?” King Sejong reluctantly ordered to fix a date for a sacrifice to heaven and Lee Won to pray for rain at *wongu* (a round altar).¹² In the 7th year of King Sejong, he made praying for rain performed (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, July 2; 4-7, 1425). During a drought in the 8th year of King Sejong, he had his subjects make sacrifices to the Supreme God and Five Emperors for praying for rain at *wondan* because his lack of virtue caused a fury of the Supreme God (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, May 4, 1426). In the sacrificial message “People are the foundations of a country. Food is very precious to people. If people lose a precious one, what can the country rely on?” King Sejong recognized that his first sovereign duty was to secure food for the people. King Sejong had to make sacrifices to heaven praying for rain at *wondan* for the sake of people because of a severe drought and had subjects make sacrifices instead of him. King Sejong displayed his political ability to meet halfway, not changing

12. June 2 of the 1st year of King Sejong. Originally, the rites of sacrifices to heaven of an emperor, except sacrifices for praying for rain and grains, were based on the subject that “Sacrifices to heaven are made at a round altar on the earth on the winter solstice” according to the ritual of Zhou. Therefore, the rites of sacrifices at a round altar in Joseon were different from those of an emperor of China in the content (Kim Hae-yeong 2003: 105).

the cause too much but gaining an actual profit. Afterwards, sacrifices were made at an altar for worshipping wind, cloud, thunder and rain (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, February 6, 1427). During the severe drought in the 9th year of King Sejong, shamans prayed for rain at the Han River. Sanghogun Lee Jin gathered young boys and lizards to pray for rain by the pond of Gyeonghoeru and at an altar for worshipping wind, cloud, thunder and rain. He also prayed for rain two days later at an altar of praying for rain (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, July 8, 9, and 11, 1427). From then on, an altar for worshipping wind, cloud, thunder and rain and an altar of praying for rain were used for praying for rain instead of *wondan*.

In the latter half reign of King Sejong, he came to have considerable confidence in statecraft. With national self-esteem rising, King Sejong first suggested the restoration of the rite for making sacrifices to heaven contrary to the beginning of his reign (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, July 10, 1443). King Sejong hoped for the restoration of the rite for making sacrifices to heaven considering that Joseon dynasty was not a country of feudal lord within the territory of China, Byeon Gye-ryang also hoped for it in the past and the northerners like Liao and Chin were also making sacrifices to heaven. July of the 25th year of King Sejong was the period just before the declaration of the completed *hangeul*. The intention of King Sejong could be fully understood considering the triangle structures of the unique rite for sacrifices to heaven, the invention of *hangeul* and the elevation of national consciousness. His intention failed because of the opposition of subjects¹³ and the rite for sacrifices to heaven at *wondan* was eventually omitted in *gilye* of Five Ritual Enforcement attached to *Veritable Records of King Sejong*. Accordingly, sacrifices to heavenly gods like a round altar and directions and ponds and worship for earth as the biggest ritual ceremony were omitted¹⁴ and substituted by praying for rain to wind, cloud, thunder and rain as the secondary ritual ceremony and substituted by praying for grains to sacrifices to the guardian deities of the State. They are arranged as follows:

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13. Hwang Hi, Lee Suk-chi, Kim Jong-seo, and Heo Heo agreed to temporary and vicarious sacrifices to heaven but Ha Yeon and Gwon Je opposed the plan strongly.
 14. King Sejo who deposed King Danjong and came to the throne abnormally restored the rite for sacrifices to heaven at a round altar to heighten his royal justification and the rite was finally omitted in *National Five Rituals Enforcement*. This means the victory of the bureaucracy of the gentry and also means Joseon became harmonized with the system of East Asian order.

	Heavenly Gods	Worship for Earth	Person's Spirit
The Biggest Ritual Ceremony		Guardian Deities of the State	Royal Ancestral Shrine
The Secondary Ritual Ceremony	Wind, Cloud, Thunder, Rain	High Mountains, Seas, Rivers	The 1 st Father of Agriculture, the 1 st Mother of Silkworm, Praying for Rain King Munseon, Dangun, Gija, the 1 st King of Goryeo
The Smallest Ritual Ceremony	Deities of Eight Directions, Sky, Cloud, Stars Officers in Charge Of Coldness	Famous Mountains & Big Rivers, Seven Sacrificial Ceremonies, Sacrificial Ceremonies Preventing Disasters	Deity Protecting Horse, the 1 st Person among Shepherds, Ritual Ceremony for Horses, Horse Race

In order to heighten the consciousness of defending the country and strengthen centralization of government since the beginning of the Joseon dynasty, personal sacrifices to famous mountains and long rivers were forbidden and the state led the sacrifices. In sacrifices to high mountains, wide seas and long rivers¹⁵ among the secondary ritual ceremony, the objects of sacrifice were increased according to territorial enlargement. After Kim Jong-seo explored six positions, King Sejong included the Duman (Tumen) River besides the Amnok (Yalu) River¹⁶ in the secondary ritual ceremony like high mountains, seas and rivers and made sacrifices to the river (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, May 1437). It was the ceremony that King Sejong declared his unshakable belief in national territory as a sovereign home and abroad. King Sejong enticed people to immigrate into a settlement area with barren soil and bad weather by cutting

15. It can be shown in the records on incense and a written ritual prayer for sacrifices to Samgak Mountain and the Han River on February 9, 1427.

16. The Amnok (or Yalu) River was included in high mountains, seas and rivers by Heo Jo during the reign of King Taejong and the Duman (or Tumen) River was included in 1437.

taxes for them to make a living there. It was considerate of King Sejong to provide them with Confucian books for enlightenment. King Sejong raised the status of Dangun worshipped at Gija shrine in Pyeongyang during the reign of King Taejong. The reason the name of the country Joseon dynasty was chosen can be found precisely in *Joseon gyeonggukjeon* (Administrative Code of the Joseon Dynasty) by Jeong Do-jeon. Dangun, Gija and Wiman had used the name of the country Joseon dynasty. Among them, Gija Joseon dynasty was the most beautiful country because it had made the Joseon dynasty a civilized country with the Grand Code. In particular, as the Gija Joseon dynasty had been ratified by Emperor Wu of the Chou dynasty, the name of Joseon dynasty can be said to include the spirit of Renaissance borrowing from an ancient model and creating newly of the new Confucian scholars aiming for a civilized country (Han Yeong-u 1999: 116). Of course, according to the suggestion of a meritorious retainer at the founding of the dynasty Jo Bak, sacrifices to Dangun as a founder of the country were made and it was true that Dangun was worshipped at the shrine of Gija. King Sejong raised the status of Dangun and constructed a shrine for Dangun with a memorial tablet “Dangun of Joseon dynasty.” King Sejong also worshipped the founder of Goguryeo, King Dongmyeong, at the same shrine, had sacrifices made to them every spring and fall and included them in the secondary ritual ceremony (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, March 6, 1431). It reveals the independent view of King Sejong on the state and his historical consciousness very clearly and should be highly evaluated as his conspicuous political achievement.

Binrye recognized the difference between the advanced culture of China and the culture of neighboring countries. The Joseon dynasty performed the rite of worship of the dominance of China as a rite of tribute. The rite of worship of the dominant was established on the basis of power dynamics between small and large countries. By using the rite of worship of the powerful as a means of diplomacy, Joseon dynasty tried to lessen the military threat of China and attain autonomy (Yu Geun-ho 2004: 25). Such an idea emerged when King Taejo Lee Seong-gye retreated from Wihwado. Under the pretext that it was improper “for a smaller country to attack a larger country,” Lee Seong-gye refused an order of the king, withdrew the army and established a new dynasty.

A few formal restrictions China imposed on Joseon dynasty were as follows:

- 1) A king of a tributary state must be appointed to the throne by the emperor of the tribute-receiving country as the king of a feudal state.

- 2) The tributary state must use the name of the era of the tribute-receiving country.
- 3) The tributary state must present goods to the tribute-receiving country.
(Park Chung-seok 1982: 56)

This relation did not assume the form of direct political rule but assumed the simply titular relation between the lord and the subject. Of course, there were some incidents at the beginning of the foundation of the country. Under the pretext that some phrases in a diplomatic document were informal and insincere, an envoy of Ming acted very coercively and told to send Jeong Do-jeon who had written the document to Ming under escort (*Veritable Records of King Taejo*, June 11, 1396). There was another incident that Jeong Chong, Kim Yak-hang and No In-do, envoys who were in Ming to solve the problem of diplomatic document were mourning because of the death of the second queen of King Taejo. This infuriated the emperor of Ming and the envoys were all executed (*Veritable Records of King Taejo*, December 1397). These incidents prove well that the diplomacy of the Joseon dynasty in worship of the powerful was not simply formal.

Worship for the powerful is mutual rites. Just as the smaller country thinks highly of the larger country, so the larger country should think highly of the smaller country (Jo Nam-uk 2001: 115). Accordingly, the country that receives tribute should reward the tribute country with a return present. During the rite for worship of the powerful, the highest protocol treatment to a Chinese envoy with a message from the emperor was given so cordially as to produce secret language like “chiksadaejeop” (hospitality shown to an envoy that brings a diplomatic letter from the Chinese Emperor). In the rite for worship for the powerful Ming, the procedure was very complicated for the king to meet an envoy of Ming and receive a royal edict or message at Mohwaru or Taepyeongwan. The king, the Crown Prince, royal kinsfolk, the State Council, and six Ministries joined in the reception of an envoy of Ming. The Ministry of Rites treated the good-neighbor relations with Japan and Ryukyu while the king only received them. From a modern viewpoint of an international relationship, these medieval rites for worship for the powerful are very complicated. When officials Park Lin and Kim Hi returned with a musical instrument presented by the Emperor of Ming during the reign of King Taejong, he ordered them to keep the instrument at Taepyeongwan because of his illness and later received it directly (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, April 8, 1405). There is an explanation that “Accord-

ing to our common sense, it is appropriate for a Chinese envoy to transmit the instrument to an official of the Ministry of Rites of Joseon dynasty.” The request of the Chinese envoy was that the king should receive the instrument directly and the attitude of the king taking this request for granted were due to the fact that the instrument was not simply a musical instrument but a gift to express serious and courteous rites (Han Heung-seop 2000: 126). The king of a feudal country received a royal edict, message and gifts not to speak of the musical instrument the Emperor of Ming presented according to the complicated and most courteous rites.

Although there were various opinions about too great a burden on tribute among the subjects, King Sejong was resolute in his convictions, saying “It is proper to respect the larger country with sincerity,” (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, September 5, 1426) and respected Ming earnestly. As a result, Ming also respected the Joseon dynasty in return (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, October 21, 1424; August 2, 1430). Meanwhile, King Sejong made a consistent diplomatic effort to realistically reduce the burden of tribute; consequently he succeeded in getting a royal edict about restricting the articles of tribute to products of Joseon dynasty and about receiving Chinese envoys only with courtesy without any extra gifts (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, December 13, 1429). These were the diplomatic results from the honesty and sincerity of King Sejong based on Confucian culture.

What is discussed in the relation of Joseon dynasty to China together with worship for the powerful is Sino-centric. While worship for the powerful means courtesy of the smaller country toward the powerful larger country, Sino-centric is the unique ideology that China was the center of the world geographically and that the Chinese culture-centered ideology to grasp the world according to the superiority or inferiority of culture. Sino-centric is the word Chinese people used in comparison with barbarian neighbors of the east, south, west and north; it meant that Chinese people were a cultivated nation enjoying high-class culture according to Confucian rites in comparison with the culture of barbarian neighbors of the east, south, west and north (Park Chung-seok 1982: 59). As stated above, the spirit of the Joseon dynasty foundation dreamt of the culturally ideal society of Gija Joseon dynasty that had been specially ratified by the Emperor Wu of the Zhou dynasty, an ancient ideal society and had ruled the country with the Grand Code. In this respect, King Sejong was not different. The idea of King Sejong written in an epitaph after repairing the shrine of Gija shows this point.

Long ago, the Emperor Wu of the Zhou dynasty conquered the Yin dynasty, appointed a high official of Yin to our country and had him accomplish “his intention not to be a subject of Zhou.” Only the culture of Gija enabled the civilization and courtesy and music of the eastern country to match those of China for two thousand years. (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, April 29, 1428)

King Sejong made an incessant effort to revive the cultural ability of Gija Joseon dynasty that had ruled the country with the Grand Code equal to that of China during his reign. At the same time, King Sejong was eager to maintain the sovereignty of the Joseon dynasty continuing from the founder Dangun. King Sejong was a benevolent king who ruled the country so that the Joseon dynasty might not collide with an independent state in the world order and that two Joseon Dynasties might be harmonized with each other.

An important case in *hyungye* is that of succession to the throne including a king who succeeds his father. *The Five Principal Rites* during the reign of King Sejong were made in special consideration of the safety of succession to the throne but the anxiety of King Sejong became a reality. The enthronement of young King Danjong after the death of King Munjong caused a weakening of royal power. The coup d'état of King Sejo to strengthen royal power might accord with the spirit of royal regulations. That is, the existence and cause of royal power were based on the theory of rites different from the theory dependent on clan regulations and the order of legitimate and illegitimate sons applicable to *garye* of the gentry. The enthronement of King Sejo disproves that the custom of political order of *hyungye* did not work properly.

Gunye shows the status of king as the supreme military commander in concrete ceremonies. The ceremonies of exercising martial arts, the great archery enforcement, the great military parade, an order for military levy, and the beating of a drum during a solar or lunar eclipse were to emphasize royal authority and show the intention of controlling military power. To exercise martial arts was to practice military training at the same time as hunting. There was a rite for offering a game hunted through exercising martial arts to the Royal Ancestral Shrine during the reign of King Taejong. But during the reign of King Sejong, the king did not like hunting, criticized that the exercising of martial arts degraded the hunting by royal kinsfolk and emphasized the exercising of martial arts appropriate to *Gunye* (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, February 21, 1432 and September 11, 1434). Accordingly, cows and sheep were substituted for games

as sacrificial offerings to sacrifices for the Royal Ancestral Shrine and guardian deities of the State. It was customary for martial arts to be practiced both in spring and in autumn. But they were stopped when an envoy of Ming came or King Sejong was not well. It was common to reduce the scale of the exercising not to cause a public nuisance in case of a bad year (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 18, 1431; January 20, 1434; January 16, 1446). The great archery enforcement¹⁷ was the ceremony an emperor chose second grade aristocracy, third grade nobles, fourth grade nobles and officers by archery long ago. The military parade was a ceremony of military rites to command the army and tighten discipline and was not frequently put into practice. King Sejong fortified the system of ruling in person and prepared an exercising place for archery within the palace in spite of the opposition of the subjects (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, February 14, 1424). King Sejong emphasized the importance of exercising archery. In the same year, regulations on the great military parade were made but the military parade was not frequently performed, which was followed by the criticism of the subjects (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, July 11, 1448). An order for military levy means an order to muster troops quickly in a revolt and an emergency. King Taejong abdicated the throne in favor of King Sejong and grasped military power had the Ministry of Defense decide on an order for a military levy (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, August 18, 1418). King Taejong was so anxious about a revolt that an article “To mobilize troops privately without the notice of the Ministry of Defense will be regarded as a revolt” was included in an order for the military levy.¹⁸ Perhaps, this anxiety forced King Taejong to exercise military power continuously. It was very inconvenient for the private movement of troops to be regarded as a revolt. When King Taejong died, King Sejong succeeded to military power and gave an order “Except that an official in charge of military affairs musters troops without permission, the meeting of large and small troops should not be regarded as a revolt,” and loosened an order for a military levy (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, December 7, 1422). King Sejong declared that he was quite indifferent to a revolt or rebel-

17. The provincial archery enforcement equivalent to the great archery enforcement was the ceremony local governors had virtuous men shoot a bow on March 3rd and September 9th of each year (Yi Tae-Jin 1986: 158).

18. The rewards for an informant of a revolt were a patch of 200 land-unit and 20 slaves. They exceeded the rewards for first-class meritorious subjects, a patch of 150 land-unit and 13 slaves (Choe Seung-hi 2002: 68-9).

lion, which means that a peaceful reign truly came. In the 5th year of King Sejong, regulations on irregular military levy, and military organization in case of military levy were checked (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 9, 1423). *Gusikbeolgo* belonging to Gunye was the ceremony in case of a solar or lunar eclipse that the king wore white clothes, did not stay at the palace where the king met the royal families and waited until the eclipse finished. In the 15th year of King Sejong, the Ministry of Rites made regulations on a solar eclipse (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, July 19, 1433). In the 15th year of King Sejong, the subjugation of the barbarian people was discussed. King Sejong had a hearing for “When military troops go to war, they inform the Royal Ancestral Shrine, guardians of earth and grains, military deities and famous mountains and big rivers.” Regulations on dispatching generals into war were also discussed. In May when subjugation of barbarian people succeeded, regulations on comforting dispatched generals were made and a feast was held (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, May 1433).

Manggwolrye was the bowing ceremony toward the emperor’s palace of Ming on the winter solstice and the first day of the year. The king seriously performed the ceremony with the Crown Prince and the subjects. The winter solstice was an important division of the year together with New Year’s Day because the duration of sunshine becomes long. *Yeongjoui* was the ceremony to receive a royal edict of Ming. It belonged not to *binrye* but to *garye* because the king met an envoy of Ming and held a feast. There are also many regulations such as ritual regulations when the Crown Prince meets ministers and others, ritual regulations when the queen meets royal concubines and families, ritual regulations on appointing a queen, ceremonial regulations on the wedding of the Crown Prince, ceremonial regulations on the wedding of princesses, regulations on circulating the order of the king, regulations on erudite and military examinations at the Palace and ritual regulations on banquet for senior citizens. The ceremonial regulations on the wedding of the princes and princesses were largely analogous to wedding regulations of the gentry and were harmonized without conflict. But in order to maintain the dignity of the royal family, there was a distinction of the ceremony between the royal family and the gentry. That is, when the Crown Princess was selected, all the marriages were prohibited in the country. The ceremonies of the entrance of princes into school and coming of age were specially prepared to show that there was a distinction of status between the royal family and ordinary people. In other areas, *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions*, the rites for the gentry were adopted positively from the beginning of

the Joseon dynasty.

A banquet for senior citizens is a good example to show the benevolent statecraft of King Sejong. King Sejong did not accept a memorial to the Throne of the Royal Secretariat that humble people should not be invited to a banquet for senior citizens, saying “How can I discriminate between good and humble people because I should take care of them all equally as a sovereign?” (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, August 29, 1427) The ordinary thought of King Sejong did not discriminate from humble people. The following is the answer of the king to the memorial to the Throne.

The reason for taking good care of the aged is to think highly of the aged and not to discriminate between good and humble people. Let even humble people attend the banquet for senior citizens...(*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, August 17, 1432)

When a banquet was held at the Throne Hall for the elderly over 80, irrespective of goodness or humbleness but according to the rank order of the king, there were 23 persons above the fourth rank and 86 people who were officials below the fifth rank, ordinary people, and slaves (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, August 27, 1432). The following day, the queen held a banquet for old women over eighty at Sajeongjeon. There were fourteen wives of officials above the second rank, thirty wives above the fourth rank, sixty-six wives above the 9th rank and 118 wives of public and private slaves (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, August 28, 1432). When senior citizens put their feet on the stone steps, the king and queen rose from the seat and paid respect to them. Originally, King Sejong had wanted to meet the senior citizens stepping down from his seat. But in accordance with the suggestion of subjects, the rite was decided for the king to rise from his seat and welcome them when they put their feet on the stone steps. Such a banquet for senior citizens is a good example for the king to take the initiative in Confucianism emphasizing respect for the aged. It can also be an epoch-making example for the king to receive them all as a subject of the king irrespective of noble or humble and rule the country benevolently. The following will review the rites for the gentry and ordinary people.

The Acceptance and Practice of *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions*

Since the beginning of the dynasty the new gentry established the Joseon dynasty with Confucianism as an ideology of the state to pursue a change of customs and environment from Buddhist to Confucian culture. Bae Geuk-yeom and Jo Jun suggested a unitary national rite that the governor of a province or a district would take care of ritual worship for Confucius, King Munseon and ritual worship for a tutelary deity, and also proposed to noble and high officials the construction of family ancestral shrines equivalent to the Royal Ancestral Shrine.

The law on family ancestral shrines has been lax for too long. But the traditional law is for every person who owns his own house to construct a shrine for deities called guard. Alas, the bodies of parents are buried under earth and their descendants are making sacrifices without constructing family ancestral shrines. On what are the spirits of parents dependent? (“Jojunjeon,” *History of the Goryeo Dynasty* Vol. 118)

This criticizes that the shrine for deities shown in the above quotation means the shrine of shamans that was substituted for a family ancestral shrine. Accordingly, the new gentry urged the construction of family ancestral shrines¹⁹ according to *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions*, and Buddhist customs and traditional beliefs in spirits symbolized in stupa and spirits were regulated as a bad sacrifice and prohibited. *The Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* had been positively accepted since the beginning of the founding of the dynasty and the plans to put it into practice and supply it were early systemized. *The Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* was adopted as a regular curriculum together with *The Elementary Learning* at five schools in Seoul and at provincial schools (Jeong Geung-sik 1999). In the 3rd year of King Taejong, newly admitted persons to the national examination and officials under the 7th rank should take an examination on *The Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* (*Veritable Records of King Taejong*, June 9, 1403). Since an embassy of gratitude Prince Gyeongnyeong brought from China

19. They urged that officials above *daebu* (scholar and military officials) should make sacrifices to three generations, officials above the 6th rank to two generations and ordinary people under the 7th rank to parents and that a clean room should be spared for sacrifices with mortuary tablets in it and that, if not, they should be punished as unfilial descendants.

the Four Books of Confucianism, the Five Classics of Confucianism and the Complete Collections of Zhu Xi, the supply of the *Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* progressed systematically. In the 8th year of King Sejong, they were adopted as a test subject at classic licentiate examination of Sungkyungwan together with *The Elementary Learning* and as an essential subject of civil service examination in miscellaneous articles of sections of ritual code, National Code.

In spite of systematic support, the construction of family ancestral shrines was not satisfactory due to an insufficient economic situation. Such a situation is shown in the records of the Ministry of Rites in the 9th year of King Sejong.

“Although the system of family ancestral shrines of high-and low-ranking officials has been enforced by royal decrees many times, quite a few officials have not constructed family ancestral shrines and mortuary tablets.... Let the house of a main shrine be given to a descendant mainly making sacrifices. Let the Office of the Inspector General in Seoul and provincial governors examine and punish those who have not constructed family ancestral shrines and mortuary tablets.” (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, February 10, 1427)

The construction of family ancestral shrines means the practice of clan lineage system centering on legitimate eldest sons. The suggestion of the Ministry of Rites was accepted that the system of the Goryeo period was of equal inheritance and rotated service such as where the place of ancestral worship rituals rotated in turn, if there were many offspring should be abolished and legitimate eldest sons should be given a favor in succession to property. The order of the king that those who managed family ancestral shrines should inherit a house caused conflicts of ownership among half brothers. The conflict of ownership between sons of the first wife and the second wife of a meritorious retainer at the foundation of the dynasty Jo Yeong-mu caused the inheritance of sacrifices centering on legitimate eldest sons to be justified. In the conflict, the son of the second wife Jo Jil was fired, received 100 cudgels and went into exile to Ganseong while the son of the first wife Jo Seo was favored and protected. (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, June 5 and 14, 1428) The construction of family ancestral shrines made a very slow progress and the period for construction was extended. King Sejong appointed those who constructed family ancestral shrines and exiled those who had not constructed them within the period (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, December 9, 1428). King Sejong tried to settle the ritu-

al orders of Confucianism while giving a break on sacrificial days and completing the system of ancestral worship rituals.

In the articles of funeral rites (*sangrye*), it was not until the period of King Sejong that the understanding of *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* deepened. When Queen Wongyeong who was the wife of King Taejong and mother of King Sejong died, King Sejong refused *yeokwoldansangje* (a system that allows mourning to be completed in thirty-six days although the convention follows the three-year mourning) flatly and actually insisted on the three-year mourning. The meaning of a sacrificial ceremony performed in the third month after burial (*jolgotje*) was understood (Ji Du-hwan 1990: 18). However, because of mourning period when the mother passed away but the father was alive (*bujaewimogi*), King Sejong observed a one-year mourning period according to *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* and also decided on the three-years mourning without wearing mourning clothes (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, November 27, 1420). At the funeral of King Taejong in the 4th year of King Sejong, the practical three-year mourning was observed. When Queen Soheon died on March 24th, the 28th year of King Sejong, King Sejong insisted on the practical three-year mourning at first, changed his mind immediately and had the Crown Prince follow a mourning period when the mother passed away but the father is alive (*bujaewimogi*).

...Was there really an argument about one-year mourning because Zhu Xi wasn't so intelligent as you are? ... You, the Crown Prince take off mourning after a sacrificial ceremony performed in the third month after burial (*jolgotje*), finish the one-year mourning in white, and then finish the three-year mourning in light blue clothes worn after mourning clothes (*cheondambok*). (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, March 28, 1446)

Light blue clothes worn after mourning clothes (*Cheondambok*) after the one-year mourning was the light jade green clothes worn at sacrifices. It is said that the three-year mourning without wearing mourning clothes was fully understood. The problem as to whether all the officials should wear white hats or black hats after a sacrificial ceremony performed in the third month after burial (*jolgotje*) was raised again and after a long discussion wearing white hats was fixed at the funeral of King Myeongjong in the period of King Seonjo. The fact that the three-year mourning without wearing mourning clothes was observed proves that the three-year mourning system in *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions*

was not settled fully in the royal funeral rites during the period of King Sejong. Meanwhile, sacrificial food was only vegetables according to Buddhist customs until the period of King Taejong; meat was also served in the period of King Sejong.

The three-year mourning system was not easy to observe even in the royal mourning and funeral rites and was more difficult for ordinary people to follow. During the reign of King Jungjong Taoists including Jo Gwang-jo were appointed, a worship ritual for Jeong Mong-ju was performed at a Confucian shrine because the practice of *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* was very important. Considering that the learning and virtues of Jeong Mong-ju were praised because he constructed a family ancestral shrine and practiced the three-year mourning according to *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions*, (Lee Beom-jik 1988: 54) it can be known that it was not easy for even the gentry to construct a family ancestral shrine and practice the three-year mourning system. In the 17th century the understanding of *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* deepened since the reign of King Sejong, the rituals for ordinary people collided with those for royal families. This was the very debate over rituals during the period of King Hyeonjong (Lee Won-taek 2000). This debate was originally provoked on the mourning clothes of King Hyojong who came to throne as the second prince and Queen Mother Za Ui at the funeral of Queen Hyojong. The rituals for royal families emphasized the selection of the wisest prince regardless of order according to the order of heaven and collided with those for ordinary people emphasizing the priority of the legitimate eldest son (Lee Eun-sun 1996: 195). This means that the political and economical status of the gentry at that time was enormously strengthened.

In the rites for marriage,²⁰ *the Book of Rites* suggested six ceremonies: wedding presents sent from the house of the bridegroom to the bride (*nabchae*), asking the family name of the mother of the bride by the family of the bridegroom (*munmyeong*), notifying the family of the bride of the date set for the wedding (*nabgil*), sending blue and red silks to the house of the bride (*nabpe*), confirming the wedding date to the house of the bride (*cheonggi*), and the going of the bridegroom to the house of the bride to welcome her and bringing the bride with him to his house to have wedding ceremony (*chinyeong*) but four ceremonies such as arranging a marriage (*uihon*), wedding presents sent from the house of

20. Refer to Kang Sook Ja's writings on the marriage system.

the bridegroom to the bride (*nabchae*), sending blue and red silks to the bride's house (*nabpe*) and the going of the bridegroom to the house of the bride to welcome her and bringing the bride with him to his house to have wedding ceremony (*chinyeong*) were popular according to *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions*. Among them, the ceremony of the bridegroom going to the bride's house to welcome her and bringing the bride with him to his house to have a wedding ceremony (*chinyeong*) was a very important Confucian ceremony. *Chinyeong* was a procedure in that the bridegroom went to the house of the bride to welcome her to bring the bride with him to his house to have a wedding ceremony. Popular traditional marriage until the end of Goryeo period was the bridegroom living in the house of the bride's family (Park Hye-in 1988). A problem was raised because *yang* moving first and then *yin* following it was against the theory of *yin* and *yang*. Jeong Do-jeon asked for the practice of the bridegroom going to the house of the bride to welcome her and bring the bride with him to his house to have a wedding ceremony (*chinyeong*). Hundreds years of tradition could not be changed in a day, King Sejong voluntarily practiced the rite of the bridegroom who went to the house of the bride to welcome her and bring the bride with him to his house to have a wedding ceremony at royal weddings. After a long discussion, King Sejong made "regulations on a prince's wedding ceremony" and "regulations on a princess's wedding ceremony" in February 1435 and held the wedding of Princess Suksin in March, the first marriage according to the rite of the bridegroom who went to the house of the bride to welcome her and bring the bride with him to his house for a wedding ceremony (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, March 4, 1435). After the rites of the bridegroom who went to the house of the bride to welcome her and bringing the bride with him to his house to have a wedding ceremony were observed in the marriages of Gwangpyeong Daegun, Hwaigun, Geumseong Daegun, Gyeyanggun, Pyeongwon Daegun, Uichanggun, Hannamgun, and Milseonggun. King Sejong took the lead in changing customs and environment into Confucian culture. It is evaluated that King Sejong became an example of noblesse oblige, morality of the leading class.

Following the rite of prohibiting marriages between the same family names stemming from Chou, King Sejong fixed a law on prohibiting marriages between the same family names among royal kinsfolk (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, July 8, 1426; June 24, 1442). While it was encouraged to remain a widow, the opinion of the widow on remarriage was most important and her parents or parents-in-law could not force her to remarry (*Veritable Records of King*

Sejong, January 21, 1420). A widower could remarry after the three-year mourning of his wife. It was prohibited for a concubine to be a legitimate wife. A husband who maltreated his wife was sentenced to ninety cudgels (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, April 16, 1425; August 10, 1426). King Sejong prevented divorces according to the principle of *sambulgeo* (three conditions of not divorcing between couples) (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, January 24, March 16, and June 16, 1423; July 7, 1425). King Sejong made every effort to fix the Confucian family system. King Sejong published and distributed *Samgangaengsildo* (A book emphasizing loyalty to the king, filial piety to parents and chastity to husbands with pictures) for ordinary people who could not understand Chinese characters. King Sejong made an incessant effort to realize an ideal society established by Confucian rites and orders while encouraging essential Confucian ideology such as loyalty, filial piety and chastity. The ideal society King Sejong longed for was as follows:

...If we work hard in the field, look up to our parents and bring up children while our people live to a great age and we can fortify the foundations of our country, everyone at his own house will be plentiful, behave with modesty and enjoy a peaceful reign because of the peaceful times and a good harvest every year. (*Veritable Records of King Sejong*, A leap month July 25, 1444)

The ideal society King Sejong dreamt of was analogous to the ancient Chinese society of solidarity. Although the pains of people never ceased because of natural disasters like drought and inundation, it is said that King Sejong was a benevolent king to do his utmost that people might make a peaceful and pleasant livelihood and pride themselves as a cultivated nation.

Conclusion

In the Joseon dynasty that substituted Buddhism of the Goryeo dynasty and was built with Confucianism as the spirit of the national foundation, the duty of the king as a man of virtue was to establish Confucian rites and orders and practice perfectly virtuous politics, the core of Confucianism. The era of King Sejong was a peaceful reign in culturally expansion in Korean history. Considering the institutionalization of the Five Ritual Codes and the Four Ritual Codes, concrete

realization of Confucian ideology, the Five Ritual Codes were completed and the practice of *the Zhu Xi Ceremonial Occasions* was deepened during the period of King Sejong. This article reviewed that King Sejong had established the rites and orders with the spirit of perfect virtue and whether King Sejong himself was a sovereign of virtue or not.

Gilye among the Five Ritual Codes, rituals for royal families was completed during the period of King Taejong. In view of the Confucian world order, only the emperor could perform the rite for sacrifices to heaven at the round hilltop shrine. Therefore, the rite for sacrifices to heaven at the round hilltop shrine in the Joseon dynasty represented as a feudal country was abolished and was substituted by the biggest ritual ceremony, the rite for guardian deities of the State. However, in the latter half of the period of King Sejong the independent consciousness of the state was being heightened, King Sejong had hoped to restore the rite for sacrifices to heaven at the round hilltop shrine. King Sejong raised the status of Dangun who was worshipped at the shrine of Gija, constructed a shrine for Dangun and had sacrifices made to Dangun as the middle ritual ceremony. They show an elevated sense of nationalism of King Sejong very well. King Sejong arranged the Amnok River attained by enlargement of territory into the middle rite ceremony for high mountains, wide seas, and long rivers and made sacrifices to the river. It also shows strong attachment of King Sejong to territory. Practicing military arts as part of military rites was customarily conducted twice a year in spring and autumn but the scale was reduced in a bad harvest not to cause a nuisance to the people. This shows the love of King Sejong for the public. Instead of a long-cherished marriage custom of *seoyubugahon*, King Sejong took the lead in practicing the rite of *chinyeong* in a royal wedding of Princess Suksin and tried to fix Confucian family system. The love of King Sejong for the people was shown well in banquets for senior citizens. According to the regulations on the banquet ritual for senior citizens, King Sejong and the Queen invited senior citizens over eighty years of age and gave a banquet. King Sejong put into practice a most important Confucian virtue to respect seniors and old people. In particular, King Sejong invited all from high officials to humble people irrespective of difference in social standing to the banquet for senior citizens. King Sejong showed his love for all his subjects.

The statecraft King Sejong with Confucian rites kept balance without leaning to either side between worship for the powerful and sovereignty, moral duty and actual profit, ideal and reality, reason and sensitivity. King Sejong was called Kings Yo and Sun in a biography after his death. King Sejong can be praised as

a benevolent king who made an incessant effort to have all the people take pride in a cultivated nation.

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