

Relationship between Confucianism and Buddhism in Early *Chosŏn*

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I.

As is widely known, the early *Chosŏn* was a period of philosophical and ideological transfer characterized by a confrontational relationship between Confucianism and Buddhism, which had been initiated by the ruling Confucian power adopting the anti-Buddhist policy. Among the most conspicuous anti-Buddhist measures was the execution of policies, in 1405 and 1406, to limit the numbers of Buddhist temples and monks and restrict the possession of land and slaves by Buddhist temples (ADC., 1:343b). Another measure taken in 1424 was to force seven Buddhist sects to merge into two schools, Meditation School and Doctrinal School, thus reducing the number of Buddhist temples (ADC., 2:591d). Similarly, the early *Chosŏn* was a

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period that continued to adopt anti-Buddhist policies to suppress Buddhism while moving ahead to actively disseminate Confucian practices such as establishing family shrines for ancestral worship and revising the practices of community rituals.

However, a more careful and scrupulous investigation of historical documents supports the realization that the relationship of Confucianism and Buddhism during this period involved some delicate changes that cannot simply be explicated by a blanket expression 'Confucian suppression of Buddhism.' From a broader perspective, starting in the later *T'aejong* period, *Chosŏn* had moved from its foundation period, which emphasized reformation, to a period of stabilization, which put more emphasis on stability. In line with this evolving trend, it is noticeable that the Confucian scholars and intellectuals became more amicable in their attitudes toward Buddhism than in the late *Koryŏ* or early *Chosŏn*.

This paper intends to delineate the actual relationship between Confucianism and Buddhism following the later *T'aejong's* regime through the thoughts of Confucian scholars in the Government School who ruled the academia of the time. Here, the Confucian scholars in the Government School can be defined by three major categories: First, they occupied the power inside the government and were in charge of managing it (Han, 1983:89); Second, geographically, they were from the central region of the country called the '*Kiho*,' which is different from those in the *Sarim* faction based in *Yŏngnam*, the southeastern region (Han, 1983:92); Third, before entering academia, they were trained, grew and graduated from the government academy called *Sunggyungwan* (Lee, 1967:220-221). In terms of academic tradition, they have a commonality in that they were not academically related with *Chŏng, Mongju*, a symbolic figure in the *Sarim* tradition (Kim, 1996:26-27). Among the many scholars in the Government School, this paper will discuss several people including *Kwon, Kŭn* (1352-1409), *Pyŏn, Kyeryang* (1369-1430), *Ch'oe, Hang* (1409-1474), *Kim, Su'on* (1410-1481), *Sin, Sukchu* (1417-1475), *Kang, Hŭimaeng* (1424-1483), and *Sŏng, Hyŏn* (1439-1504).

II.

Just like the Confucian reformers in the previous time, anti-Buddhism was a basic position even to the Government School scholars. They knew very well that the diffusion and establishment of Confucian order would be possible only by restricting Buddhist influence. As a leading power responsible for the reformation in the time, they also inevitably became sensitive about Buddhism's economic and political abuses and allegedly evil practices. In fact, one of the historic missions conferred to them was to eliminate Buddhist authority within the society. They were expected to create policy devices in this regard as well as to justify and propagate the ideology of anti-Buddhism.

Their criticism of Buddhism largely took three forms. The first one was the belief that Buddhism hinders the realization of Confucian ethics and mortality among humans. For example, *Kwon, Kŭn* criticized that Buddhism "promoted to abandon human ethics and morality and to leave kings and parents" (CYC., 12:133b), a tenet which was shared by all Confucian scholars, who believed that loyalty to kings and filial piety to parents were the foundations of a moral system. Since they believed that human relationships such as that between king and subject, parents and children, and husband and wife were natural among humans, Buddhist preaching to disconnect all attachments concerning secular relationships, including all moral obligations, was totally unacceptable to them (CPT., 2:275a-b). This criticism has always constituted the core of Confucian criticism with regard to Buddhism, and this is an issue which two religions will find impossible to reconcile. The Government School scholars consistently maintained their position and criticism on this point.

Second, they pointed out the detrimental influence of the excessive private economy of Buddhist monasteries over the public one. Historically speaking, not only during the late *Koryŏ* but also even after the inception of *Chosŏn*, it is found that the private economy of Buddhist monasteries exerted a negative impact on the state economy. Even though the Rank-Land Law had been enforced to impose a

sanction against all private property, including the lands of Buddhist monasteries during the late *Koryŏ*, the restrictions referred only to land donations made to Buddhist temples and monks. This measure helped put an end to the further expansion of the monastery economy, but the monks had already owned much of the land and labor force. The reason why *Chosŏn* failed to secure enough land for stable military supply despite the enforcement of the Rank-Land Law is mainly due to its failure in dismantling the economy of Buddhist monasteries. Therefore, the dissolution or suppression of this economy was among the policies of priority for *Chosŏn*.

The scholars of the Government School were well aware of the situation that *Chosŏn* was facing, and actively cooperated in criticizing the adverse effects of the Buddhist monasteries' economic power. One of the popular theories they used was a traditional 'Theory of Four Strata of People,' in which an ideal society is defined as comprising of four strata—bureaucrats, farmers, artisans, and merchandisers—and as a place where these four groups of people interact organically. Therefore, they saw monks who neither worked nor belonged to any of these groups as useless and even went so far as to consider them evils in the society. For example, *Ch'oe, Hang* mentioned that "people of old time said, if a man didn't plow, the world would starve as much, and if a woman didn't weave, the world would tremble in cold as much. Now I see an overwhelming number of monks out there and they all rely on farmers for food, women for clothes. So they are burdens to people at the bottom and also bothering to the country's economy on the top. Nothing will be worse than this." (CLTHJ., 1:198b). Such beliefs about Buddhism among Confucian scholars provide an important basis for their criticism of Buddhism.

Lastly, they also pointed out various problems of Buddhist theory, against which they built their criticism. As one of the most noticeable instances, the Government School scholars criticized the Buddhist world view through their interpretation of the *Book of Changes*. For instance, 'Hexagram of *Kyŏm*', a chapter of the *Book of Changes*, says, "There is the land in the middle of mountain that is *Kyŏm*. A noble person would

see this hexagram and measure weights of things in order to make equal distributions.” Mentioning that he had once discussed the hexagram with a Buddhist monk, *Kwon* pointed out that “the Buddhist understanding of this as being equal and non-discriminatory is problematic” and insisted, “it is to weigh things by holding the scale still, adjusting and balancing the poise of a scale.” In other words, while the Buddhism of the time upheld the ideals of benevolence and compassion from the passage in the *Book of Changes*, which involve equality and non-discriminatory truth, *Kwon* interpreted this as “the equality as to earn the dues so that nothing goes over or short for everybody.” That is a state in which everybody is treated fairly according to their social conditions; thus he criticized the Buddhist interpretation. According to him, “being non-discriminatory based on ‘Concern for Everyone’ might look equal but in fact that makes it unequal on the contrary.” (See *Kwon’s* interpretation of *Kyōm* Hexagram in RSB for the discussions above).

This criticism basically derives from the Confucian critique of Mohism. For example, *Yang, Shi* of Song China, warning that ‘*Western Inscription*’ by *Zhang, Zai* can be misconceived as the theory of ‘Concern for Everyone,’ points out that “the Western Inscription has a mind for equal distribution, but not the righteousness in weighing things relevantly.” ‘Humaneness’ of Confucianism is not indiscriminative love although it ultimately aims for it. It is methodically a discriminatory love; therefore the ‘Concern for Everyone’ in Mohism, in other words, an indiscriminative love, can be criticized as ‘a theory without parents’ by Confucianism.

Just as *Yang* criticized *Mozi’s* theory, *Kwon* applied similar logic to his criticism of Buddhism. This Confucian understanding is derived from its theory called the ‘*Doctrine of Li-yi-fen-shu,*’ which states that the principle of the world is one, but individual reasons are discriminatory. *Kwon* also mentioned that “our Confucian Way is just one, but each individual practice should be different. The heterodox theories are different because they talk about love for everyone in a non-discriminatory way.” (RSB., *ibid.*). This confirms that his theory is

based on the 'Doctrine of *Li-yi-fen-shu*' and it is obviously the most efficient theoretical tool of Confucianism for criticizing Buddhism.

Kwon also insists that Buddhism's belittlement of 'Three Bonds' originated from the problem of its metaphysics. He believes that human minds and the principle of things are not divisible but that Buddhism sees them as separate and tries to focus only on the truth of mind, which results in neglecting the truth of things, in other words, the ethical order of the real world. "As far as I know, Buddhism teaches us to detach from what we see and to disconnect from ethical relationships, which means that it views human minds as separate from the principle of things. In this status, the mind lacks 'Essence/Substance' and loses 'Function/Phenomenon.'" (CYC., 11:130d).

In other words, he concludes, although, in order to complete a balanced world, a human should consider inside and outside together and be equipped with 'Essence' and 'Function' together, Buddhism fostered evil practices by emphasizing the inner world and 'Essence' only. According to him, "discarding my mind would cause a loss of the 'Essence' due to the lack of its base and disconnecting from things would make a human improper to perform so he/she could not exercise 'Function.' Being equipped both with 'Essence' and 'Function' and cultivating oneself to embrace the inside and outside together are the ways of Confucianism." (CYC., 15:166d).

This criticism focuses on the difference of views on the 'Theory of Essence-Function' in Confucianism and Buddhism. Through this, *Kwon* tried to reveal the differing understanding of Buddhism which denies the entire world in the first place, and then attempts to establish a new relationship of the world by affirming what it denied from a different perspective. This opposes the way of Confucianism which accepts all moral orders of the phenomenal world, considering them as the reflection of mind, and tries to establish a relationship between the mind and the world from there.

The Confucian criticisms against Buddhism in the early *Chosŏn*, in regard to the instances above, were not simply either declaratory or superficial. Overcoming discrimination is a matter of course but the

issue of managing the chaos which results from it is a primary concern which Buddhism needs to address.

Interestingly, the task of disputing the theoretical problems of Buddhism was mostly undertaken by *Kwon* among the many scholars in the Government School. This implies that he was outstanding enough in his knowledge and theory to confront the Buddhist theory, but it also relates to the fact that he lived before most of the Government School scholars. The confrontation between Confucianism and Buddhism was most severe at the time when the inception of *Chosŏn* was being pushed forward, and thereafter it became weaker and weaker as Confucianism took predominance through the establishment of a new dynasty with new systems and proceeded toward the period of stabilization. That *Chŏng, Tojŏn*, one of the leading members who worked for the establishment of *Chosŏn*, strongly proclaimed anti-Buddhism in his book titled *Miscellaneous Disputes against Buddhist Doctrines* also relates to the need of the time. He lived the time when a compromise with Buddhism was unthinkable. Although those scholars who came after *Kwon* basically echoed their predecessors in their position of anti-Buddhism, they were not as articulate as the latter, who urged for the explicit obliteration of Buddhism.

III.

Even *Kwon* was not always seen as consistent in his position against Buddhism. Although his argument was yet to reach the point of eclecticism between Confucianism and Buddhism, he didn't completely reject Buddhism. Some of the previous researches indicate that due to *Kwon's* political position being different from the one of *Chŏng*, "He demonstrated a sort of compromising attitude toward Buddhism although theoretically opposing it." (Chŏng, 1988:76). It is true that most of the Government School scholars sought to obtain at least a partial harmony with Buddhism instead of excluding it entirely. A theoretical ground that can be found relevant for the harmony of Confucianism and Buddhism, if any, must be this: Both Confucianism and Buddhism

are ultimately systems which have the Learning of the mind at their center.

Although I don't know much about the Buddhist Way, it takes root in mind and compares it to a pure jewelry, through which the core of Buddhism remains within the mind. Oh, how prodigious the mind is! The Way of Trinity of Heaven, Earth and Man is completed with mind while the profundity of Three treasures is rooted in mind (CYC., 11:122c).

In this passage, *Kwon* acknowledges Buddhism as a study of mind and, from the perspective of the virtue of mind, compares the Way of Trinity of Heaven, Earth and Man in Confucianism to the Three treasures in Buddhism. He understands that "the mind is enormous and strong and fills the entire world. So if Buddhist monks keep this mind correctly and expand it diligently, then they could accomplish the state of Diamond body." (CYC., 11:122d). In his letter to a monk called *Sōrak*, he also mentions that "although I don't know the Buddhist Way well, it must be within the enormous world of mind. The magnitude of mind is like space. There is no difference between things and self, and outside and inside. This must be the reason you are seeking for mind and true name." (CYC., 15:166d). Such a thought is unique to *Kwon* and can't be found in the thoughts of *Chōng*. This does not reflect an attitude of anti-Buddhism; rather, it is seen that he attempted to seek a harmony between Confucianism and Buddhism by the means of mind.

There is another Confucian scholar named *Ch'oe, Hang* who similarly sought a harmony of the two religions.

When it comes to study about mind, a shade of dependent origination is not a true mind. The true mind is oddly bright, so how could the Buddhist theory stay out of it? ...[The] world has the fundamental principles so it should be managed by mind (CPTHJ., 160d).

They both shared the understanding that the practical principles of Buddhism converge around the training of the mind. Meanwhile, the theory of self-cultivation of the Government School also values the study

of mind. That “the core of studying is to put the scattered mind under control” (CPHJ., 13:102d) was a commonly shared recognition among the Government School scholars. Their theory of self-cultivation was constructed of two parts, that is, a study of preserving the substance of mind and a study of protecting it from the interruption of immoral desires. Based on this homology, some of the Government School scholars understood Buddhism as a study focusing on mind and sought a compromise between Buddhism and their own theory of self-cultivation. Another example of this kind of recognition is found in *Sin, Sukchu*.

The heaven has the One by which it runs day and night and all lives while humans have the One by which they prepare and diligently work for changes. How prodigious the virtue of the One is! How could Confucius and Shakyamuni be different in the workings of the One? (CPHJ., 14:110d).

Here, ‘the One’ can be translated in many different ways, but in terms of cultivating mind, it is the true mind that *Zhou, Dunyi*, who laid a foundation for Neo-Confucianism, mentioned. In a commentary about the above quote, *Park, P’aengnyon* (1417-1456) made it clear that ‘the One’ indicates the true mind, mentioning that “*Zhou* made the One central in the Learning of the Sage and *Sin* already knew the secret of it.” (CPHJ., Appendix:156b). Therefore, *Sin* sought a balance based on the point that both Buddhism and Confucianism respect the study of the true mind.

It is true that a study of mind is central both in Buddhism and Confucianism, but that does not make Confucianism and Buddhism identical. In Confucianism, the preservation of mind is purported ultimately to strengthen the moral and ethical order in reality. The Government School scholars were also well aware of this. Nevertheless, they cautiously tried to look for a way to be in harmony with Buddhism through the medium of mind. The above examples are theories of rather passive attempts for harmony. Some scholars were even more explicit in aggressively insisting on a unity of Confucianism

and Buddhism. For example, the scholar *Kim, Su'on* remarks;

If water is pure, substance gets calm. If the substance gets calm, the inborn nature gets clear. If the inborn nature gets clear, everything is reflected through it. When it comes to mind, it is a state that has no joy, anger, sorrow, or pleasure aroused. So all the principles of the world come out of it and it is the foundation of the world (CSW., 2:81b).

In this quotation, *Kim's* inborn nature corresponds to the pure human nature in Buddhism. He often uses an allegory of the relationship of pure water and the things reflected against it, referring to the pure human nature. For example, he writes, "Buddha said that we all have true mind which is empty and calm, and the godly ability of knowing. ... [It] is just like the moon being reflected against the water when the water is calm and pure." (CSU., 2:101c). In this quotation, the mind that has yet to be aroused with the feelings of joy, anger, sorrow, or pleasure, is the one 'that has not started working yet' which refers to the inborn nature in Confucianism. Thus, *Kim* sees that the Buddhist and Confucian understandings of human nature or the nature of mind are identical.

Furthermore, *Kim* refers to Confucian metaphysics which says, "all things under the sun are countless but they all came out of the Supreme Polarity. Although they are different in kind, they all carry their own Supreme Polarity." (CSU., 2:82d-83a). He relates this to one of the stories about Shakyamuni in which he held up a flower for the people to see. According to his explanation, one 'principle' embedded in a lotus flower reaffirms its nature that doesn't get stained even in the mud and is identical with the pure original mind of humans. In his explication, the universality or omnipresence of Supreme Polarity and the ubiquity of original mind are translated as having the same meanings (CSU., 2:83a).

Kim was also well aware that his thought could be criticized. In anticipating possible questions such as "Isn't this too garrulous and incorrect not only to confer a 'principle' to minute things like a lotus

flower but also to talk about the Supreme Polarity and Non-Polar and beyond?" (CSU., 2:83b) he attempted to justify his theory by relating it to *Zhou's* Theory of Loving the Lotus Flower. According to previous researches, the Theory of Loving the Lotus Flower was influenced by the Study of the Flower Adornment Sutra connoting the unity of the pure nature of Buddha and the immaculate nature of the human being (Hou, 1987:81). Therefore, his justification using the Theory of Loving the Lotus Flower reveals evidence that *Kim* must have understood human nature in both religions, Confucianism and Buddhism, as identical.

Taking the above into consideration, it is understandable that he admired Buddhism as in the following and advocated the completion of the Confucian edification and human ethic by means of Buddhism.

I believe that Buddhism originated in India and widely rendered the principle of impermanence. ... [Historically] many wise kings and emperors accepted and used it to accomplish prosperity and were able to return to a vast teaching reaching beyond generations. How could we deny that these five precepts and ten benevolences from the teaching had helped kings to civilize the people? How could we deny that its assertion of bringing kings longevity and their countries good fortune contributed to disseminate human morality? (CSU., 2:85b).

This means that Buddhist teaching can also achieve the idealistic rule which Confucianism advocates. Therefore, from his point of view, kings should use a pure mind as their fundamental principle in ruling people. Just like this, *Kim* insists on the possibility of achieving harmony between Confucianism and Buddhism not only in ontological discourses but also in theories of ruling. Another Confucian scholar, *Sŏng, Hyŏn* takes the same position, actively advocating the harmony of Confucianism and Buddhism.

On the whole, I believe the Way is just one. The Ways we see in the Supreme Polarity of *Book of Change*, the Consistent Way from *Zengzi*, Mysterious Female in *Laozi*, or the Teaching of Non-dualism in Buddhism look different but they are all same

in principle. Thus, differentiating them divides the ways of commoners from those of sages. What is the same teaching? It is to work for everything without intention. Then what about the different teaching? Some start from being and others end by non-being. However, in fact, all of them are the same things (SAEL., 18).

Here, *Sŏng*, although presuming some differences among the three traditions, Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, tries to embrace them, based on ultimate unity.

In fact, the Government School scholars didn't hesitate to communicate and associate with Buddhist monks. When Buddhist monks went on journeys seeking enlightenment, some of these scholars even voluntarily wrote poems or essays for them. It is obvious that this was not merely accidental, but was intended because they had been developing theories to justify their association. For example, *Yun, Sang* says, "Don't you know that *Han Yu* and Monk *Taidian* of *Tang* Dynasty were friends, which has not been blamed until now for more than thousand years? If you don't lose your original mind, what is the problem in Confucians being associated with Buddhists?" (CPT., 1:271a).

In terms of their emotions, the Government School scholars seem to have held an unusually favorable regard for Buddhism. For example, we see affection for Buddhism in *Pyŏn Kyeryang's* poem which reads, "I love the mind of a monk, nothing righteous or wrong, even among people he is lying in the purple mist." (CCJ., 2:38d). Additional examples of a similar affinity can often be found in the writings of Government School scholars, as in the following:

Essentially there are no such things as same and different. It is only the halo arousing the wind of eon. Enlightenment gets rid of obsession, then it fills with true self. Why don't we ask various Buddhas for help? (CPHJ., 6:46a).

Three Vehicles are given their names regardless of their will and any of five constituents of the personality does not reflect its true features. Do detach from the six windows and disconnect delusions. That is a true feature (CTHJ., 1:160d).

Littoral bamboos wear a sacred appearance. Who would dare to tell the truth and the false? Matter is Emptiness (*Sunyata*) and Emptiness is Matter. This is why we discuss wisdom (*Prajna*) (CSSJ., 5:68c).

Similar examples are more frequently found among the Government School scholars in the later period during King *Sejo*'s regime, such as *Ch'oe*, *Sin* and *Kang*, as quoted above. This resonates again to the demand of the time, as the necessity for anti-Buddhism became weaker and weaker with the process of time.

Some researches comment that Confucian intellectuals of this period tried to seek compromise and harmony with Buddhism. *Kūm* even labeled *Kim* as a harmonist of Confucianism and Buddhism, (Kūm, 1982:316-317) and other researchers, reviewing historic and philosophical changes of the time, often recognized this effort towards harmony of the two traditions as the trend of the time (Han, 1981:11; Mun, 1984:40-47; Kim, 1982:274-275).

IV.

In conclusion, the Government School scholars seem to have worked in seeking harmony with Buddhism rather than being simply committed to adopt a policy of anti-Buddhism. Not all scholars were in agreement with this approach, but the trend was generally accepted with no significant resistance. Considering the many writings involving Buddhism that existed, we cannot conclude that this period was one of a monolithic confrontation between Confucianism and Buddhism. Rather, Confucianism of the time does not seem to have been very exclusive to Buddhism. Why was there not more of an opposition to Buddhism? With regard to this question, I would like to point out three areas of consideration.

First, we must address the historic mission of this period given to the Government School scholars. As briefly mentioned previously, they had a mission of stabilizing and prospering the country. A series of reformations begun in the late *Koryŏ* had been almost completed by the

time of King *T'aejong*, who succeeded in solidifying the power of the throne. Since then, the conservativeness of stabilization rather than the progressiveness of reformation seemed to gain more recognition among these scholars. This also can be translated as an expression of confidence that the initial objectives of the dynasty concentrated on centralizing the state power had been somewhat attained and that the management of the state had entered into a stable circuit. At the same time, this reflected the concern that, by preventing any possible social resistances that the continued reformation drive might have caused and integrating heterogeneous forces into the order of the dynasty, the achievement of social stability would be effected. Those who substantially undertook this mission were the Government School scholars.

If it wished to implement a period of stability and prosperity, it was natural for *Chosŏn* to seek for social compromise and harmony with various forces. Despite continued oppression of Buddhism during the early *Chosŏn*, Buddhism was far from being eradicated and still remained as a significant and influential force within society. The Government's anti-Buddhism policy was not very effective and the religious consciousness of Buddhism that had penetrated into people's lives for generations was difficult to eliminate. Moreover, Buddhism still enjoyed sizable economic foundations and Confucianism could not completely replace its religious functions such as answers concerning the world after death and prayer for blessings. Therefore, during the era from King *Sejo* to King *Sŏngjong*'s regimes, ironically the possession of land by Buddhist temples as well as the number of monks had even increased.

The *Chosŏn* Dynasty, in its wish for stability and prosperity, couldn't continue to exclude the Buddhist religion which existed as a significant force among the people. In an effort to respond to the mission of the time, *Chosŏn* was compelled to embrace Buddhism. In 1419, it is observed that the King *T'aejong* expressed his worries about possible resistance caused by an oppressive policy against Buddhism and said:

(Due to my anti-Buddhist policy) Temples are left only with one tenth of farmers and no of slaves. Although they deserve it, how could they not have resentments? They are now hopeless. If they hear about the Emperor of *Ming* China who admires Buddhism, some would possibly run away to China to make a false charge against *Chosŏn*. ... [People] in the past often changed their system according to the political necessity of the time. Now, I believe, it is time that Buddhist monks and its believers should be given means for obtaining comfort and joy (ADC., 2:349c).

Following his words, *Chosŏn* took measures such as to return slaves previously owned by temples, although this practice was limited to those in *Hanyang*, the capital city. In other words, the dynasty was ready to compromise with Buddhism only in order to ensure the stability of the people under its rule. Thus, we see the legitimacy of the following comments: “the government during King *Sejong*’s regime had insights, in response to the demand for stabilization of this period, that the unity among people could be achieved only by providing adequate reason for Buddhism to be sustained within a certain boundary,” (Kŭm, 1982:294) or that “such religious integrations (of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism) were not ever more wished by the kings who wanted a strong throne. This is because religious integration is one of the tools to attain social integration.” (Han, 1981:11). The fact that the Government School scholars sought harmony with Buddhism while proclaiming an anti-Buddhism at the same time also reflects the position of the rulers.

Second, I would like to point out the favorable tendency towards Buddhism among the royal family during this period of strong royal power. King *T’aejong* set an example of being consistent with his anti-Buddhism policy, but there were other kings who admired Buddhism. King *Sejong* in his later regime and King *Sejo* are two examples of kings who showed a great deal of affection towards Buddhism and often confronted certain Confucian scholars who believed that Buddhism should be excluded (Han, 1964:61-66). In general, it was a time of strong royal power and the Government School scholars were committed to protecting the position of the royal family. Therefore the

royal family's favorable attitude towards Buddhism was something that couldn't be ignored. For example, *Kim Su'on's* harmonization theory had been developed within the circumstances of an intimate relationship with the royal family (Kŭm, 1982:314-315).

Third, let us consider the philosophical characteristics of the Government School Confucians. As I elaborated further in other articles, the Confucian scholars in the Government School valued the mind in their view on humans and emphasized the study of mind in their theory of self-cultivation (See Kim, 1996:129-156). Even when seeking harmony with Buddhism, their approach was from the perspective that the mind is at the center. In other words, their views on humanity as well as their theory of self-cultivation functioned as linking loops with Buddhism. The fact that the Government School scholars were not those claiming the thorough predominance of the 'Principle' can be also considered (Kim, 1996:99). The Confucian ostracism against heresy came out of the absolute predominance of 'Principle' but the Government School scholars were not in complete accordance with this predominance theory: this enabled them to take a more flexible approach to Buddhism, which was labeled as heretical at that time.

Therefore, the attitude of the Government School scholars toward Buddhism is not at all accidental. It was deeply rooted in their historic mission of the time and their political tendency to be protective of the royal family, and furthermore it was based on their philosophical thought. Thus, it was a necessary consequence. This kind of flexible attitude not only applied to Buddhism but also to other heretical thoughts such as Daoism and Shamanism.

The discourses on the philosophy of the early *Chosŏn* have been negligent on the roles of these Government School scholars, and have only focused on orthodox Neo-Confucianism. However, it was those Government School scholars who led the academia of thoughts during the 15th century and from this perspective, the relationship of Confucianism to Buddhism during this period should not be understood simply as a confrontation, but as one in which diverse possibilities were sought in answer to the demands of the time.

Glossary

- anti-Buddhist policy 排佛政策
 Concern for Everyone 兼愛
 Consistent Way 一貫之道
 Doctrine of *Li-yi fen-shu* 理一分殊說
 Essence/Substance 體
 five constituents of the personality 五蘊
 five precepts and ten benevolences 五戒十善
 Flower Adornment Sutra 華嚴經
 Function/Phenomenon 用
 Government School 官學派
 Hexagram of *Kyōm* 謙卦
 Learning of mind 心學
 Learning of the Sage 聖學
Miscellaneous Disputes against Buddhist Doctrines 佛氏雜辨
 Mysterious Female 玄牝
 Non-Polar 無極
 Rank-Land Law 科田法
 Supreme Polarity 太極
 Teaching of Non-dualism 不二法門
 Theory of Essence-Function 體用論
 Theory of Four Strata of People 四民論
 Theory of Loving the Lotus Flower 愛蓮說
 Three Bonds 三綱
 Three Vehicles 三乘
 Trinity of Heaven, Earth and Man 三才

Abbreviations

ADC	<i>Annals of the Dynasty of Chosŏn (Chosŏn wangjo-sillok)</i> . The Institution of Korean History
SAEL	<i>Supplement to the Anthology of Eastern Literary works (Sok-Dongmunsŏn)</i> .
CCJ	<i>Collected works of Ch'unjŏng</i> (SKCW 8:1-248)
CLTHJ	<i>Collected literary works of T'aehŏjŏng</i> (SKCW 9:182-218)
CPHJ	<i>Collected works of Pohanjea</i> (SKCW 10:1-174)
CPT	<i>Collected works of Pyŏltong</i> (SKCW 8:289-320)
CPTHJ	<i>Collected poetic works of T'aehŏjŏng</i> (SKCW 9:153-181)
CSSJ	<i>Collected works of Sasukchae</i> (SKCW 12:1-170)
CSU	<i>Collected works of Sik'u</i> (SKCW 9:75-150)
CYC	<i>Collected works of YangCh'on</i> (SKCW 7:1-350)
RSB	<i>Records of Shallow Views on the Book of Changes.</i>
SKCW	<i>Series of Korean Collections of Works (Hanguk-munjip-ch'onggan)</i> . Korean Classics Research Institution.

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