

Research Note 【研究討論】

The Role of Tasan Learning in the Making of  
East Asian Confucianisms:  
A Twenty-first-century Perspective  
東亞儒學中的茶山學：二十一世紀的視野<sup>§</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

The great eighteenth-century Korean Confucian scholar, Chǒng Yagyong 丁若鏞 (Tasan 茶山, 1762-1836), is a pivotal thinker in the history of East Asian Confucianisms. While inheriting Zhu Xi's (1130-1200) philosophical legacy, Chǒng Yagyong was innovative in reworking many of the core ideas of Zhu Xi's thought, particularly the philosophy of Humanity.

In the first section of this article, I shall consider the special features of Korean Confucianism in the context of East Asian Confucianisms. Second, I will discuss how Tasan creatively remolded the old to shape the new in the making of East Asian Confucianisms. Finally, I will reflect on Tasan's important message for us today in this globalized age of the twenty-first century.

## 2. Special Features of Korean Confucianism

Confucianism first arose about 2,500 years ago on the Shandong Peninsula. It was based on the teachings of Confucius 孔子 (551-479 BCE) and Mencius 孟子 (C.371-C.289 BCE). However, during the following 2,000 years Confucianism developed widely into a cultural-spiritual resource shared by the many diverse peoples and lands around East Asia. Hence, we may speak of the making and rise of East Asian Confucianisms.<sup>1</sup>

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1 Cf. Huang Chun-chieh 黃俊傑, *Dongya ruxue: jingdian yu quanshi de bianzheng* [East Asian Confucianism: The Dialectics between Classics and Interpretations] 東亞儒學：經典與詮釋的辯證 (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2007); Japanese edition: *Higashiajia no jugaku: keiten to sono kaishaku* 東アジアの儒學：經典とその解釋 (Tokyo: Penkansha, 2010); Korean edition: *Tong Asia yugyo kyōngjōn haesōkhak* 동아시아 유교 경전 해석학 (Seoul: Munsach'ol 文史哲出版社, 2009).

While these various East Asian Confucianisms were incubated and developed over 2,000 years across a vast territory (that included China, Korea, Japan, Vietnam, and Taiwan), the Confucian traditions in these lands all shared some characteristics in common while also displaying some regional differences. For example, the Confucian traditions of China, Korea, and Japan were each based on Confucius' core values of "Humanity," "Appropriateness," "Ritual Propriety," and "Wisdom"; but in each land these core values were adapted and developed in response to their respective differing social, political and economic circumstances and needs, thus giving rise to unique intellectual characteristics in each of these settings. Moreover, we find that when Confucian values were expressed and used in China, Korea, and Japan, they began to play different roles in each country. For example, when we look at tenth-century China and fourteenth-century Korea, we find that the Chinese *Shidaifu* (士大夫) and the Korean *Yangban* (兩班) both began to assume political power and privilege. However, Japanese Confucians of the Tokugawa era (1603-1868) simply functioned as public intellectuals in society, without any political overtones or power.<sup>2</sup> While Chinese, Korean, and Japanese Confucians all held universal Confucian core values in common, they expressed them differently in each place—just as the waters of the same river acquire different tastes and characteristics in different places.

In the making of East Asian Confucianisms, Korean Confucianism manifested the following two special characteristics:

First, Confucianism became highly influential in Choson Korea, virtually occupying the position of an established state religion.<sup>3</sup> Korean Confucianism

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2 Cf. Hiroshi Watanabe, "Jusha, Literati and Yangban: Confucianists in Japan, China and Korea," in Tadao Umesao, Catherine C. Lewis and Yasuyuki Kunita (eds.), *Japanese Civilization in the Modern World V: Culturedness* (Senri Ethnological Studies 28) (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 1990), pp. 13-30.

3 Cf. Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology* (Cambridge, Mass. and London: Council on East Asian Studies, Harvard University, 1992), pp. 3-27.

became deeply steeped in the philosophical tradition of Zhu Xi. From the sixteenth century, a series of great masters in Zhu Xi's learning arose: First, Yi Hwang 李滉 (T'oegye 退溪, 1507-1570) and Yi I 李珥 (Yulgok 栗谷, 1536-1584), followed by Song Seyeol 宋時烈 (Uam 尤菴, 1607-1689), Han Wonjin 韓元震 (Namdang 南塘, 1682-1751), etc. Their reflections and disputes were centered on such concepts as Pattern or Principle (*Li* 理), Cosmic Vapor (*Qi* 氣), Original Nature (*benranzhixing* 本然之性) and Embodied Nature (*qizhizhixing* 氣質之性), the Four Sprouts (*siduan* 四端), the Seven Emotions (*qiqing* 七情), Aroused Emotions (*yifa* 已發), Pre-aroused Emotions (*weifa* 未發), the Human mind-heart (*renxin* 人心), and the Way heart-mind (*daoxin* 道心), all of which were important concepts in Zhu Xi's learning.<sup>4</sup> However, while continuing to build on the philosophical foundation laid in Zhu Xi's learning, these Korean masters were also highly creative and innovative. For example, after the fourteenth-century Choson Confucian Kwŏn Pu (權溥, 1262-1346) edited and reprinted Zhu Xi's *Four Books with Collected Commentaries* (*Sishu Zhangju Jizhu* 四書章句集註), Zhu Xi's learning became widespread in Choson Korea. In their interpretations of Confucius' *Analects* (*Lunyu* 論語), most of the Choson Korean Confucians adopted Zhu Xi's position that "human nature is a matter of principle" (*xing ji li* 性即理). When they encountered the word "learn" or "learning" (*xue* 學) in Confucius' thought, they interpreted it in terms of the expression "learning of the great man" (*darenzhixue* 大人之學) from the *Great Learning* (*Daxue* 大學), that is, as a sort of "learning of moral conduct" (*dexingzhixue* 德行之學). When interpreting Confucius' saying that his Way was "connected by a single thread" (*wu dao yi yi guan zhi* 吾道一以貫之; *Analects* IV, 15), the Korean Confucians mostly followed Zhu Xi's thesis that it is the mind-heart (*xin* 心) that brings pattern or principle (*li* 理) into play. And yet, they were also innovative and departed from Master Zhu Xi by interpreting

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4 Cf. Sasoon Yun, *Critical Issues in Neo-Confucian Thought: The Philosophy of Yi T'oegye* (Seoul: Korea University Press, 1990).

Confucius' "single thread" in terms of the virtue of sincerity or authenticity (*cheng* 誠).<sup>5</sup>

Consequently, we could say that the making of Korean Confucianism was a process of interaction and negotiation with the *subjectivity* of native Korean culture and thought. It was not just a subplot in the development of Chinese Confucianism in Korea. When we see Korean Confucianism as the Korean edition of Confucianism among the broad multiplicity of editions of East Asian Confucianisms, we view the making of Korean Confucianism as a process of adaptation to *Korean subjectivity*. This adaptation took place through processes of interaction between the special characteristics of Korean culture, society, politics, and economy with features of incoming Chinese Confucianism. We should not view Korean Confucianism as simply the transplanted and growth of Chinese Confucianism in Korea. The result of this change of perspective is that we can avoid the antagonistic dichotomies of "orthodoxy vs. heterodoxy," "center vs. periphery," etc. We should not present Confucianism as a single paradigm and assess whether Korean Confucianism is "orthodox" by the standard of Chinese Confucianism.

Second, we can describe Korean Confucianism as a central platform connecting Chinese Confucianism to the East and Japanese Confucianism to the West. In this way, Korean Confucianism forms a span or bridge of Confucian thought, values, and practice. According to Abe Yoshio 阿部吉雄 (1905-1978), the seventeenth-century Japanese Confucian scholar Fujiwara Seika 藤原惺窩 (1561-1619) thoroughly accepted the insights and teachings of the Korean Confucian Gang Hang 姜沆 (1567-1618). We even see that Hayashi Razan 林羅山 (1583-1657) embarked on his study of Zhu Xi's learning through the Korean edition of *Master Li Tong's Replies to Questions* (*Yanping dawen* 延平答

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5 Huang Chun-chieh 黃俊傑, *Dongya ruxueshi de xinshiyue* [New Perspectives on East Asian Confucianism] 東亞儒學史的新視野 (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2007), pp. 245, 274.

問), which was Zhu Xi's record of the discourses of his teacher, Li Tong 李侗 (Yanping 延平, 1088-1163). Yamazaki Ansai's 山崎闇齋 (1618-1682) study of Zhu Xi's learning was intimately related to the writings of Yi T'begye.<sup>6</sup>

Because Korea made such a large impact on the formation of Japanese culture and thought, it was able to form a cultural bridge between China and Japan. We see an example of this in the fierce debate that arose between the eighteenth-century Japanese scholar Tō Teikan 藤貞幹 (1732-1797) and the nationalist thinker Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長 (1730-1801) regarding the origin of Japanese culture. Tō Teikan insisted that Japan's imperial lineage, language, surnames, etc., had all been transmitted from Korea. But this thesis that Japan's culture had come from abroad stirred up harsh criticism by Motoori Norinaga who accused Tō Teikan of being insane.<sup>7</sup> This episode in Japanese intellectual history is often referred to as the debate over the "Korean question." At its heart is a question of the extent of Korea's role as a cultural bridge in China's cultural influence on Japan.

In conclusion, we can see that in the process of the formation and development of East Asian Confucianisms, Korean Confucianism was deeply steeped in the intellectual heritage of Chinese Confucianism (especially of Zhu Xi's learning). Yet at the same time, a creative transformation took place in Korea, as elements of incoming Confucianism interacted with the spatial and temporal elements of life on the Korean peninsula. As master Yi Toegye wrote in the preface to his *Essentials of Zhu Xi's Writings* (朱子書節要), "How could it be that here, east of the sea, after several centuries, that when I study [Zhu Xi's] writings I don't subtract from or add to his testament for [our] study?" (況今生於

6 Abe Yoshio 阿部吉雄, *Nihon Shūshigaku to Chōsen* 日本朱子學と朝鮮 (Tokyo: Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai 東京大學出版會, 1965, 1975).

7 Tō Teikan 藤貞幹, *Shōkōhatsu* 街口發, and Motoori Norinaga 本居宣長, *Kenkyōjin* 鉗狂人, in Washio Junkyō 鷺尾順敬 (ed.), *Nihon shisō tōsō shiryō* 日本思想闘争史料 (Tokyo: Meitoyo Kankokai 名著刊行會, 1964-1970), vol. 4, pp. 227-312. Cf. Koyasu Nobukuni 子安宣邦, *Hōhō toshite no Edo: Nihon shisōshi to hihan-teki shiza* 方法としての江戸：日本思想史と批判的視座 (Tokyo: Perikansha, 2000), pp. 16-26.

海東數百載之後，又安可漸見於彼，而不爲之稍加損約，以爲用工之地？)<sup>8</sup>  
 When the Korean Confucians absorbed Chinese Confucianism, they strove to construct their own *Korean subjectivity*, and in playing the role of a cultural bridge between Chinese and Japanese Confucianisms, the influence they exerted on the development of Japanese Confucianism was truly remarkable.

### 3. The Position of Tasan's Learning in the Making of East Asian Confucianisms

We can view the position of Tasan's learning in the making of East Asian Confucianisms from many different perspectives. Yet, most importantly, Tasan created a brand-new trend in Confucian thought by synthesizing the learning of his East Asian Confucian heritage (especially Zhu Xi's learning) with the Catholicism that he encountered.<sup>9</sup> In the making of East Asian Confucianisms, Tasan poured new wine into old wineskins, paving a new way toward future development.

Tasan was a man of broad and deep erudition. Like Zhu Xi and other East Asian Confucian philosophers, he wrote new commentaries on the Confucian classics and established his own system of thought.<sup>10</sup> In his commentaries on the *Book of Change* (易經), the *Analects* of Confucius (論語), the *Mencius* (孟子), the *Doctrine of the Mean* (中庸), the *Great Learning* (大學), etc., Tasan followed

8 Yi Hwang 李滉, *Chujasöchölyosö* 朱子書節要序, *Tosan chönsö* 陶山全書 (Seoul: Toegyehak Yön'guwön 退溪學研究院, 1988, *Toegyehak ch'ongsö* 退溪學叢書), BK. 3, vol. 59, p. 259.

9 Don Baker, "Tasan Between Catholicism and Confucianism: A Decade Under Suspicion, 1797-1801," *Journal of Tasan Studies*, vol. 5 (2004), pp. 55-86. It has been argued that the concepts of Heaven, Nature and man in Tasan's work exhibit the influence of Christianity. See Seoung Nah, "Tasan and Christianity: In Search of a New Order," *The Review of Korean Studies [The Academy of Korean Studies]* 4 (2000), pp. 35-51.

10 Chun-chieh Huang, "The Philosophical Argumentation by Historical Narration in Sung China: The Case of Chu Hsi," in Thomas H. C. Lee (ed.), *The New and the Multiple: Sung Senses of the Past* (Hong Kong: The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2004), pp. 107-120.

the important contributions made by Zhu Xi. Yet he also absorbed the thinking of the Japanese Classicists. Tasan accepted Zhu Xi's dichotomy of "human mind-heart/Way mind-heart" and acknowledged the central position of the *Great Learning* and the *Doctrine of the Mean*. As Tsai Chen-feng 蔡振豐 has noted, Tasan added new phenomena to Zhu Xi's learning, adding new water from a fresh stream. Thus we should regard Tasan's thought as "post-Zhuxism" (後朱子學) rather than as "anti-Zhuxism" (反朱子學).<sup>11</sup>

Tasan continued Zhu Xi's learning, but he also innovated. Most specifically, he offered a new interpretation of Humanity (humaneness, benevolence 仁). Humanity is the most important of the core values of East Asian Confucianisms. The term *Ren* 仁 appears 105 times in 58 chapters of Confucius' *Analects*. The Southern Song Neo-Confucian synthesizer Zhu Xi composed the "Treatise on Humanity" in which he used his ontological framework of *Li* (pattern, principle) and *Qi* (cosmic vapor) to highlight the ontological, existential, ethical, and psychological dimensions of Humanity. Through this profound essay, Zhu Xi greatly enhanced the breadth and depth of human life. In his *Collected Commentaries on the Four Books*, Zhu Xi presented his new definition of humanity as "the virtue of the mind-heart and the principle of love," thus laying the metaphysical foundation for ethics. However, Zhu Xi's account of humanity encountered severe criticism by eighteenth-century Japanese and Korean Confucians. The Tokugawa Japanese Confucians sharply criticized Zhu Xi's metaphysical foundation and stressed the need to consider concrete social, political, and daily-life contexts when interpreting the meaning of Humanity.<sup>12</sup>

11 Tsai Chen-feng 蔡振豐, *Chaoxian ruzhe Ding Ruoyong de Sishuxue: yi Dongya wei shiye de taolun* 朝鮮儒者丁若鏞的四書學：以東亞為視野的討論 (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2011), p. 312.

12 Huang Chun-chieh 黃俊傑, "Zhuzi 'Renshuo' zai Dechuan Riben de huixiang 朱子〈仁說〉在德川日本的迴響," paper presented to the Fourth International Conference on Sinology 第四屆國際漢學會議論文 (Taipei: Academia Sinica, June, 2012).



Tasan's discussion on Humanity is quite in keeping with the views of those eighteenth-century Japanese Confucians. Tasan could not agree with Zhu Xi's claim that human nature is just a matter of principle. Tasan also opposed Zhu Xi's dichotomy of "embodied human nature" and "original human nature," advocating instead that human nature is a matter of appetites and tastes.<sup>13</sup> Tasan discussed the meaning of Humanity in the concrete existential contexts of human life, noting:

[Zhu Xi's *Four Books with*] *Collected Commentaries* reads: Humanity is the totality of virtues of the original mind-heart. I [Tasan] consider that Humanity is a property of human beings. Humanity consists in the appropriate intercourse between two people. For example, when father and son fulfill their mutual relations, Humanity lies therein. When the ruler and minister fulfill their mutual relations, Humanity lies therein. When husband and wife fulfill their mutual relations, Humanity lies therein. The significance of the term Humanity emerges in the appropriate intercourse between two people. Close at hand among the five basic human relationships, at a distance among the myriad clans under Heaven, whenever any two people appropriately fulfill their mutual relations, therein lies what is called Humanity. It was for this reason that the Master Yu said, "As to filial piety and fraternal affection, they are the root of Humane practice." Any interpretation of the term Humanity should follow along these lines.<sup>14</sup>

In the preceding statement, Tasan argued that, "The significance of the term Humanity emerges in the appropriate intercourse between two people. [...] Whenever any two people appropriately fulfill their mutual relations, therein lies

13 Chǒng Yagyong 丁若鏞, *Yöyudang chönsö* 與猶堂全書 (Seoul: Minjokmunhwamungo 民族文化文庫, 2001), BK. 4, vol. 5, p. 435.

14 Chǒng Yagyong 丁若鏞, *Yöyudang chönsö* 與猶堂全書, BK. 5, vol. 12, pp. 453-454. Cf. Tsai Chen-feng, *Chaoxian ruzhe Ding Ruoyong de Sishuxue: yi Dongya wei shiye de taolun*, p. 319.

what is called Humanity" (仁之名必生於二人之間，〔……〕，凡人與人盡其分，斯謂之仁). In effect, he was overturning Zhu Xi's definition of Humanity as "the virtue of mind-heart and the principle of love," (心之德，愛之理) by replacing Zhu Xi's metaphysical grounding of Humanity with an ethical, relational account of Humanity. In his thinking, Tasan especially stressed that the core of Humanity lies in the appropriate interpersonal intercourse between two or more people. Indeed, as Tsai Chen-feng points out, in Tasan's discourses on Humanity, Humanity serves as both a type of "practical subjectivity" in a person's moral consciousness as well as a type of "interactive subjectivity" in one's moral practice.<sup>15</sup> In comparison with Zhu Xi's ethical theory, Tasan's ethical theory is relatively plain, down-to-earth, practical, and far less speculative.<sup>16</sup>

*Inter-subjectivity* forms the core of Tasan's new discourse on Humanity. It is certainly deeper and more innovative than the Tokugawa Japanese Confucians' discussion on Humanity. While the seventeenth-century Japanese scholar Hayashi Razan followed Zhu Xi's substance/function paradigm in discussing Humanity, he still stressed the "function" of the practicality of Humanity in concrete ethical conduct.<sup>17</sup> Miyake Shōsai 三宅尚齋 (1662-1741) stressed Humanity as the "principle of love" in the experiential context of concrete daily life.<sup>18</sup> Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁齋 (1627-1705) criticized the Song Neo-Confucian accounts which regarded Humanity as human nature. In contrast, he argued that the practical significance of Humanity is concrete and lies in its "function," rather than in an abstract "substance."<sup>19</sup> Although Itō Jinsai<sup>20</sup> and Toshima Hōsho 豐

15 Tsai Chen-feng, *Chaoxian ruzhe Ding Ruoyong de Sishuxue: yi Dongya wei shiye de taolun*, p. 122.

16 Seungkoo Jang, "Tasan's Pragmatic View of Ethics," *The Review of Korean Studies [The Academy of Korean Studies]*, 4 (2000), pp 19-33.

17 Kyoto shisekikai 京都史蹟會 (ed.), *Hayashi Razan bunshu* 林羅山文集 (Tokyo: Perikansha, 1979), vol. 67, p. 832.

18 Miyake Shōsai 三宅尚齋, "Mokushiroku 默識錄," in Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 and Kanie Yoshimaru 蟹江義丸 (eds.), *Nihon rinri ihen* 日本倫理彙編 (Tokyo: Ikuseikai 育成會, 1901), vol. 1, p. 482.

19 Itō Jinsai 伊藤仁齋, "Gomō Jigi 語孟字義," in Inoue Tetsujirō 井上哲次郎 and Kanie Yoshimaru 蟹江義丸 (eds.), *Nihon rinri ihen* 日本倫理彙編, vol. 1, p. 290. For an English translation of this book, see John Tucker, *Itō Jinsai's Gomō Jigi and Philosophical Definition of*

島豊洲 (1737-1814) both wrote texts titled "Treatise on Humanity 仁説," they still had not realized that the substance of Humanity lies in *interactive subjectivity* in the appropriate intercourse between two people. Consequently, Tasan's discourses on Humanity holds a very special place in the making of East Asian Confucianisms.

#### 4. The Impact of Tasan's New Insights and Teachings for the Twenty-first Century

As the twenty-first century unfolds, we find that the spiritual legacy of Tasan's learning bears profound insights and teachings for our modern age. In the following, I will concentrate on two examples.

First, Tasan's world of thought was animated by the spirit of practical learning which is brimming with important new insights for our time. Like the eighteenth-century Japanese Confucians, Tasan opposed Zhu Xi's fundamental *li-qi* dualism and its related ethical duality. Many eighteenth-century Japanese of them Confucians did not accept any *Li* of metaphysical principle or ethical norm. Most argued that the ethical ground of Heavenly Principle could be discerned directly in the expression of Human Desire. The Chinese Confucian scholar Dai Zhen 戴震 (Dongyuan 東原, 1724-1777) launched a vehement attack against Zhu Xi's ethical dualism. However, in Tasan's practical learning he stressed that only after one had concretely and specifically carried out some ethical conduct could one understand the abstract and general values. Tasan noted:

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*Early Modern Japan* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1988).  
20 Toshima Hōshū, "Jinsetsu 仁説," in *Nihon jurin sōsho* 日本儒林叢書 (Tokyo: Ootoi Shuppan 鳳出版, 1971), vol. 6, p. 5.

The terms Humanity, Appropriateness, Ritual Propriety and Wisdom are realized completely only after one has carried out such affairs. Therefore, only after one first loves others can one be described as being of Humanity. Before one has loved others, the term Humanity has not been established with respect to that person. Before one has conducted oneself uprightly and fittingly, the term Appropriateness has not been established with respect to that person. Only after guest and host have interacted with utmost Appropriateness has the term Ritual Propriety been established. Only after affairs and phenomena have been distinguished and discerned clearly has the term Wisdom been established.<sup>21</sup>

In the above passage, Tasan's argument that "the terms Humanity, Appropriateness, Ritual Propriety and Wisdom are realized completely only after one has carried out such affairs," expresses the philosophical thesis that "affairs are prior to principle," which is a practical insight for the twenty-first century.

The main, leading trend in the twenty-first century is globalization. Under this trend, the interactions between countries are becoming ever more closely interconnected.<sup>22</sup> Kenichi Ohmae 大前研一 (1943-) suggests that today's world could be called a "borderless world,"<sup>23</sup> and that we may even see now a foreshadowing of "the end of the nation state."<sup>24</sup> Yet under the trend of globalization, the stronger countries at the center of the globalization process use their political, economic, and military advantage to control and exploit the weaker countries and peoples on the periphery. Noted linguist and public intellectual, Noam Chomsky (1928-), characterized these strong countries as

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21 Chōng Yagyong 丁若鏞, *Yōyudang chōnsō* 與猶堂全書, BK. 4, vol. 5, p. 413.

22 Anthony Giddens, *Beyond Left and Right: The Future of Radical Politics* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 4-5.

23 Kenichi Ohmae, *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy* (New York: HarperBusiness, 1990 revised edition).

24 Kenichi Ohmae, *The End of the Nation State: The Rise of Regional Economies* (New York: Free Press, c1995).

"rogue states."<sup>25</sup> The main factor driving this unequal process of globalization is an abstraction of the concrete context of interactions between nation and nation, people and people, allowing it thus to become a sort of de-contextualized, abstract principle that can then be seized and utilized by powerful countries for their own ends. Tasan's practical, empirical thought reminds us that "existence precedes essence."<sup>26</sup> It is only after affairs (including people) have been carried out and understood in their concrete particularity that we can establish abstract and general values. Otherwise, decontextualized abstract principles can easily fall under the control of the few in powerful countries who then use such principles as a tool to pressure and control weaker countries. Thus, Tasan's thesis that "affairs precede principle" has great relevance when we want to understand and critique the rising trend of globalization in twenty-first-century international relations.

Second, Tasan saw the incredible importance of the notion of "cultural identity." This serves as a fresh insight and inspiration during the formation and interactions of the new international order of the twenty-first century. In a recent book examining East Asian Confucianisms, I argue that among the four factors of "self," "other," "cultural identity," and "political identity," it is "culture identity" that is most important. To East Asian Confucians, we feel that since each of the three main East Asian countries (China, Korea, and Japan) all share the same core values (Humanity, Appropriateness, Ritual Propriety, and Wisdom), the tension between the "self" and the "other" between them can be dissolved. Thus, Tasan, after reading Japanese Confucian masters such as Ogyū Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666-1728) asserted that Japan would not invade Korea;<sup>27</sup> conversely, the seventeenth-century son of Itō Jinsai, Itō Tōgai 伊藤東涯 (1670-1736) also

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25 Noam Chomsky, *Rogue States: The Rule of Force in World Affairs* (London: Pluto Press, 2000).

26 This proposition comes from Jean-Paul Sartre's (1905-1980) famous 1946 lecture entitled "Existentialism is a Humanism."

27 Chōng Yagyong 丁若鏞, "Ilbonron 日本論," *Yōyudang chōnsō 與猶堂全書*, BK. 2, vol. 12, pp. 282-283.

believed there was absolutely no possibility that Confucius and Mencius would have led an invasion of Japan.<sup>28</sup>

Tasan also strongly criticized the geographic explanation of *Zhongguo* (China 中國) as *the* "Middle Kingdom." He argued that the geography of the Earth was not divided into cardinal directions of north, south, east, and west, and thus every country could be regarded as *Zhongguo* when viewed from its own perspective:

If we were to grasp the center as *the space between* north, south, east, and west, then no matter where one goes, it will be "*Zhongguo*." By what absurdity [is Korea] called the "East Country?" As to the land called "*Zhongguo*," what is the rational basis for that specific name? There was the "*Zhongguo*" that was ruled by Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang. There was the "*Zhongguo*" that had the learning and cultivation of Confucius, Yan Hui, Zisi, and Mencius. So then, what is the rational condition for the existence of "*Zhongguo*?" If the condition is that it has the rule of the sages and the learning and cultivation of the sages, then the name of "*Zhongguo*" should pass to "East Country" (Korea), which deserves it. Why should the ideal of "*Zhongguo*" be sought in a faraway place?<sup>29</sup>

Tasan thus followed the Japanese high standard for using the country name *Zhongguo*, and he reflected that Japan "certainly has people who honor Ritual Propriety and Appropriateness and yet are far-reaching in their reflections; thus,

28 Huang Chun-chieh 黃俊傑, *Dongya wenhua jiaoliu zhong de rujia jingdian yu linian: hudong zhuanhua yu ronghe* [Confucian Classics and Their Ideas in the Cultural Interaction in East Asia] 東亞文化交流中的儒家經典與理念：互動、轉化與融合 (Taipei: National Taiwan University Press, 2010), pp. 39-60. Korean edition: *Dongasiahak yongubangboplon: dongasiaesŏ munhwagyŏryu wa yugagyongchŏnui yiniŏm* 동아시아학 연구방법론—동아시아에 서문 화교류와 유가경전의 이념 (Seoul: Simsan, 2012).

29 Chŏng Yagyong 丁若鏞, *Yŏyudang chŏnsŏ* 與猶堂全書, BK. 2, vol. 13, pp. 393-394.

it is said that Japan today is without worries."<sup>30</sup> Tasan argued that cultural values transform and transcend the limitations of national politics and the impact of military affairs. This recommendation should be regarded as a very positive insight for remaking our new world order in the twenty-first century!

## 5. Conclusion

In the history of the making of East Asian Confucianisms, resonances can be discerned between the eighteenth-century Korean Tasan, the seventeenth-century Japanese Itō Jinsai and the eighteenth-century Chinese Dai Zhen. They all pushed new intellectual trends that helped East Asian Confucians critique, break through, and think beyond the scope of Zhu Xi's learning.<sup>31</sup> With regard to Zhu Xi's learning, in some respects we can say that Tasan followed in his footsteps while in other respects he developed something innovative and new. Tasan was also well-versed in the Confucian thought of the Japanese Classical school which he also criticized<sup>32</sup> while constructing his own system of thought.

In this age of rising globalization, the treasure house of Tasan's learning, his philosophical legacy and spiritual resources, especially his practical thesis that "affairs precede principles" and his advocacy of using cultural values to transform and transcend the impact of national political and military affairs can

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30 Chǒng Yagyong 丁若鏞, "Ilbonron 日本論," *Yōyudang chōnsō* 與猶堂全書, BK. 2, vol. 12, pp. 282-283.

31 Huang Chun-chieh 黃俊傑, "Dongya jinshi ruxue sichao de xindongxiang: Dai dongyuan, Yiteng Renzhai yu Ding Chashan dui mengxue de jieshi 東亞近世儒學思潮的新動向：戴東原、伊藤仁齋與丁茶山對孟學的解釋," in Huang Chun-chieh 黃俊傑, *Ruxue chuantong yu wenhua chuangxin* [The Confucian Tradition and Cultural Innovation] 儒學傳統與文化創新 (Taipei: Grand East Book Co., Ltd. 東大圖書公司, 1983), pp. 77-108. Korean translation of this article appears in *Tasan Hakpo*, 6 (1984), pp. 151-181. Don Baker characterizes Tasan as a "rebel" in the Confucian tradition; see Don Baker, "Thomas Aquinas and Chǒng Yagyong: Rebels Within Tradition," *Journal of Tasan Studies*, vol. 3 (June, 2002), pp. 32-69.

32 Mark Setton, "A Comparative Study of Chǒng Yagyong's Classical Learning (Susahak) and Japanese Ancient Learning (Kogaku)," *Journal of Tasan Studies*, vol. 3 (June, 2002), pp. 230-245.

all play vital roles in the building of a more just world order in the twenty-first century and beyond.