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Rethinking the Foundation and Development of "East Asian Silhak": *With a Focus on the Establishment of Its Concept and Periodic Classification*

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Abstract

In the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, East Asia witnessed new academic trends emphasizing social practice and reform over theoretical considerations. These trends gave rise to Silhak 實學 ("Practical Learning") in Korea in the late Joseon dynasty, Qixue 氣學 ("Learning of Vital Forces") in China in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, and Kogaku 古學 ("Ancient Learning") in Japan in the Edo period. A concept of "East Asian Silhak 東亞實學 (East Asian Practical Learning)" can be conceived in the context of strengthening the Confucian statecraft in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. However, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this academic trend, so-called East Asian Practical Learning, was manifested in the form of "pursuit of West-centered modernity" in the three East Asian countries. It would be appropriate to understand it as a "modern transformation of East Asian Confucian thought" rather than as the Confucian statecraft in the context of Confucianism. When attempting to incorporate the ideological transformation of Confucianism in East Asia in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries into the concept of Silhak, there are issues such as: the conceptual confusion between Silhak of the late Joseon dynasty of Korea and Kaozhengxue 考證學 ("Evidential Learning") of the Qing dynasty of China; and their pursuit of modernity based on the premise of anti-Zhuzi studies. Given these complexities, this article underscores that the genesis of New Silhak in twenty-first-century East Asia lies in the simultaneous relationship between Zhuzi studies and Silhak, reflecting the Confucian ideal of *neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王 ("inner sage and outer king").

Keywords: East Asian Silhak, Confucian statecraft, Silhak 實學 ("Practical Learning"), modernity, anti-Zhuzi studies, *neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王 ("inner sage and outer king")

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I. Introduction: Justifying the Concept of "East Asian Silhak"

The Korean word *silhak* 實學 was originally a common noun meaning "genuine learning," but in the seventeenth and eighteenth century it became the historical proper noun "Silhak (Practical Learning)" referring to the specific school of learning focused on "meeting desperate public needs and solving social problems caused by the Imjin War (Japanese Invasion of Korea in 1592) and the Byeongja War (Qing Invasion of Korea in 1636) by improving various systems such as politics, economy, religion, and culture" (Lee 1999, 806). That is, Korean Silhak can be said to refer to the strengthened Confucian statecraft, which actively promoted the improvement of social systems by prioritizing actions in reality in the late Joseon dynasty of Korea.

Given the historical distinctiveness seen in such definition as "Korean Silhak," it would be feasible to conceive "East Asian Silhak 東亞實學 (East Asian Practical Learning)" as a concept encompassing the academic trends of China and Japan in the same period and to organize its contents. In other words, considering that the proper noun "Silhak" was born out of the specific social context of Korea in the late Joseon dynasty, it would be possible to draw up the concept of "East Asian Silhak" only when identifying certain similarities and consistencies among the thoughts and ideas of China, Japan, and Korea in the period from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, going beyond a simple integration of them based on regional proximity. In this regard, a brief historical background would be helpful. In the early to mid-seventeenth century, a sequence of events, which can be called "historical transitions," occurred in the three East Asian countries. These included the outbreak of the Imjin War in 1592 and the Byeongja War in 1636 in Korea, the fall of the Ming dynasty and the establishment of the Qing dynasty in 1644 in China, and the beginning of the Edo Shogunate in 1603 in Japan. They allowed for the emergence of new trends even in the Confucian studies of the three countries, which put more emphasis on social actions and reform than on the metaphysical theory on the nature of the heart-mind (*simseong* 心性). As such, these new academic trends contributed to strengthening the Confucian statecraft, and eventually gave shape to Silhak 實學

("Practical Learning") in Korea, Qixue 氣學 (Learning of Vital Forces) in China, and Kogaku 古學 ("Ancient Learning") in Japan. This examination provides a basis for justifying the establishment of the concept of "East Asian Silhak" by showing the changes in the focus of Confucian studies in East Asia in the seventeenth to eighteenth century, which occurred in the direction of strengthening the Confucian statecraft.

However, when it comes to whether the concept of "East Asian Silhak" makes sense even for the period of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the following question arises: if the concept could be justified based on the three East Asian countries' common focus on the strengthening of the Confucian statecraft in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, can the similar academic trends common to the three countries be found in the nineteenth to twentieth centuries? In addition, as mentioned above, considering that Silhak was established in Korea as an academic term referring to the Confucian studies emphasizing social reform in reality in the late Joseon dynasty, it leads to another question: whether the academic trends similar to Korean Silhak observed in China and Japan in the nineteenth and twentieth century as well as in the current times can be placed on the same line with Silhak, which is characterized by "reinforcement of Confucian statecraft in the late Joseon dynasty."

Based on the above questions, this article attempts to shed light on the creation and development of the academic trends similar to Korean Silhak in East Asia, mainly from a macroscopic perspective. With this purpose, first, the creation and characteristics of Silhak trends in Korea, China, and Japan in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries will be briefly reviewed, and then several problems of the studies conducted on East Asian Silhak in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries will be analyzed and discussed. Lastly, this article argues that the conception of "East Asian New Silhak 東亞新實學 (East Asian New Practical Learning)" in the twenty-first century should start from the establishment of the simultaneous relationship between Zhuzi studies of Neo-Confucianism and Silhak based on the original Confucian ideal of *neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王 ("inner sage and outer king").

II. Changes in East Asian Silhak in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries and in Korean Silhak in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

As mentioned above, entering the seventeenth century, China, Japan, and Korea experienced historical and political upheavals "separately but simultaneously." Accordingly, in the thoughts and studies of the three East Asian countries, significant changes occurred, such as the emergence of a new ideological trend, which emphasized concrete actions in the real world and sought to improve life and society through them, putting greater emphasis on practical issues rather than theories.

First, in Korea, this trend gradually became more prevalent after the Imjin War in 1592 and the Byeongja War in 1636, and by the eighteenth century, it was established as a new school of thought known as "Silhak of the late Joseon dynasty." This school of thought, whose most notable representatives were Yu Hyeong-won 柳馨遠 (1622–1673), Lee Ik 李瀷 (1681–1763), and Jeong Yak-yong 丁若鏞 (1762–1836), criticized the situation where so much focus was placed on theoretical interpretations of Zhuzi studies that practical aspects of the world were relatively neglected, and sought to strengthen the doctrine of governance with which to govern the country and improve people's livelihood.

In the case of China, as Wang Yangming's Xinxue 心學 (Learning of the Heart-Mind) leaned towards obsession with Chan texts and words—which was often labeled "crazy Chan" (*kuangchan* 狂禪)—at the end of the Ming dynasty, empty discourses on the heart-mind became more prevalent in the academia as well as in the society. In response to this, voices were raised criticizing this trend lacking any will for "governing the state and benefiting the people" (*jingshi jimin* 經世濟民; *gyeonse jemin* in Korean). In the early Qing dynasty, the tone of this criticism was intensified, with more emphasis placed on the empirical examination of human traits and emotions and the improvement of reality rather than on abstract metaphysical discourses. This ideological trend led to the birth of Qixue 氣學 ("Learning of Vital Forces") in the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, whose most prominent representatives were

Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695), Yan Yuan 顏元 (1635–1704), and Dai Zhen 戴震 (1724–1777).

A similar academic trend developed around the seventeenth century during the Edo period (1603–1867) of Japan, and was eventually shaped into a new school of thought called Kogaku 古學 (Ancient Learning), which put more emphasis on empirical knowledge and practices in reality than on the Confucian discourses on the Way of Heaven or the nature of the heart-mind. Its representative scholars include Ito Jinsai 伊藤仁齋 (1627–1705), Ogyu Sorai 荻生徂徠 (1666–1728), and Dazai Shundai 太宰春台 (1680–1747). They argued that Zhuzi studies misinterpreted the true tenets of Confucianism and therefore that the practical application of Confucian thoughts should be directly based on the teachings Confucius and Mencius.

As such, the common characteristics of these academic trends that emerged in the three East Asian countries in the specific period from the seventeenth to the eighteenth centuries, i.e., Silhak in the late Joseon dynasty of Korea, Qixue in the late Ming dynasty of China, and Kogaku in the Edo period of Japan, can be summarized into three categories. First, Zhuzi studies, based on the philosophical ideas such as the doctrine of principle (*li* 理) and vital forces (*qi* 氣), advocated a universal absolute truth using the concepts such as the Way of Heaven (*tiandao* 天道), human nature (*xingming* 性命), and the nature of the heart-mind (*xinxing* 心性), while Silhak, Qixue, and Kogaku all emphasized concrete actions in experienceable reality. Second, since all the three schools of thought placed particular importance on practical actions and the improvement of the social system, they gave relatively more weight to *qi* than to *li*. Third, they were generally critical of Zhu Xi's teachings and clearly showed the tendency to return to the original Confucianism centered on the teachings of Confucius and Mencius. As can be seen from these similarities, the basis of these academic trends was still rooted in the soil of Confucianism. In this respect, it can be said that the "East Asian Silhak 東亞實學 (East Asian Practical Learning)" that emerged, encompassing the Korean Silhak, the Chinese Qixue, and the Japanese Kogaku in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, was a sort of Confucian statecraft in which the social aspects of Confucianism were significantly strengthened.

However, it should be noted that there is a considerable distance between the "Silhak" of East Asia, which is relevant to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly, the mid-to-late twentieth century, and the "Silhak" of the late Joseon dynasty. To be specific, around the port-opening period (1876–1910) of Korea, there was an increase of interest in the Confucian scholars who had intensively emphasized the Confucian idea of "governing the state and benefiting the people" during the reigns of King Yeongjo and King Jeongjo (Cho 2004, 214–23). And in the early twentieth century, Korean intellectuals, having faced Japan's colonial rule of their country, set about the work of systemizing the strengthened Confucian statecraft of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, referring to it as "Silhak" (Noh 2019, 229). The essential things to be noted here are the purposes for which the Korean intellectuals of the times did such work. First, they paid heed to the traditional thought dating from the Joseon dynasty to kindle the national spirit among the people so that they could resist Japanese colonial rule. Second, they sought to discover the modern ideas latent in the traditional thought, particularly focusing on the school of thought emphasizing the ideas of "pragmatic statecraft" (*gyeongse chiyong* 經世致用) and "economic enrichment" (*iyong husaeng* 利用厚生), and began to call the school of thought "Silhak" (Lee 2020, 182).

This trend that emerged with an emphasis on "modernization" in the study of Korean Silhak in the twentieth century continued even after Korea attained independence from Japan in 1945. In the 1960s, especially after the end of the Korean War in 1953, when Korea began to promote in earnest modernization in the economic field, Silhak of the late Joseon dynasty served as the basis for the kind of modernization that pursued the wealth of the people and the nation through economic growth as well as for the "indigenous development theory"—which refutes the argument that Japanese colonial policy made possible modernization of Korea—to overcome the colonial view of history that had been prevalent in Korean society even after its liberation from the 35-year colonial rule by Japan (Han 2007, 29–40). In this manner, through a series of processes, the meaning of "Silhak" pursuing modernity, especially in the economic aspect, in the mid-to-late twentieth century, was added to "Silhak," which had originally

meant the strengthened Confucian statecraft in the late seventeenth to early eighteenth centuries.

Similarly, with the gradual mainstreaming of the academic trend reflecting the era's call for "modernization focused on economic growth" in China and Japan in the mid-to-late twentieth century, Qixue of China and Kogaku of Japan, both stemming from the strengthened Confucian statecraft of the seventeenth and eighteenth century just like Silhak, began to be referred to as Silhak. This paved the way for the discussion of East Asian Silhak. East Asian Silhak in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries pursued a goal very different from that of Confucianism in its traditional sense. That is, Korean Silhak, Chinese Qixue, and Japanese Kogaku, which had shared the same Confucian statecraft in the ideological and academic context of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, were integrated under the regional category of "East Asia"—in contrast to the West—in the historical and political context of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The fact that a wave of academic trends referred to as "Silhak" emerged based on strong demands for modernization in China, Japan, and Korea in the nineteenth and twentieth century tells that East Asian Silhak of the seventeenth and eighteenth century and that of the nineteenth and twentieth century are basically different in their content and nature.

III. Studies on Silhak in China and Japan in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

Considering that it is common in the history of Confucian classical studies to contrast Buddhism with Heohak 虛學 ("learning without essence," *xuxue* in Chinese) and Confucianism with Silhak 實學 ("practical learning," *shixue* in Chinese), this tells us that the phrase "Silhak" was a term designating the whole of Confucianism in China. However, in the 1980s, Silhak began to be studied as a concept defining the Confucian thought of the Ming and Qing period. For example, in 1985, Chen Guying 陳鼓應 (Professor of the Department of Philosophy at National Taiwan University), Xin Guanjie 辛冠潔 (Professor at the Philosophy Institute of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences), and Ge Rongjin 葛

榮晉 (Professor of the School of Philosophy at Renmin University of China) launched an academic project to study the Silhak of the Ming and Qing periods—the first ever joint project between China and Taiwan, which resulted in the publication of the three-volume *Ming-Qing shixue sichaoshi* 明清實學思潮史 (A History of the Practical Learning School in the Ming and Qing Periods) in 1989. After its publication, Silhak was accepted as a specific academic concept in China and began to be mentioned in various treatises. In line with this trend, Ge Rongjin, in particular, has been actively advocating the study of Silhak in mainland Chinese academia since the 1990s till the recent period.

However, the trend of promoting and fostering research on Silhak did not lead to logical and distinct outcomes. In September 1992, the Taiwan Academia Sinica's Institute of Chinese Literature and Philosophy held a roundtable discussion entitled "The Current Status and Prospect of the Study of Silhak in the Ming and Qing Periods" with the aim of examining the status of the studies on Silhak, which were spreading like a trend in mainland China in the early 1990s. In particular, Jiang Guanghui 姜廣輝, a professor at the Institute of History of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, who had participated in the writing of *A History of the Practical Learning School in the Ming and Qing Period,* attended the roundtable. He provided a detailed account of the book's background, writing process, and his evaluation of studies on Silhak during the Ming and Qing periods in mainland China. The attending scholars, both from Taiwan and mainland China, presented different views on the phenomenon of studying Silhak while limiting it to that of a specific period, i.e., the Ming and Qing periods, but they agreed on the need to reexamine and discuss the starting point, scope, and content of the studies on Silhak of the Ming and Qing periods, conducted by many experts including Professor Ge Rongjin.[1]

[1] According to Jiang (1992), even the authors of *A History of the Practical Learning School in the Ming and Qing Periods* failed to reach an agreement in applying the concept of Silhak to the trend of thought in the Ming and Qing dynasties. He recalls that the absolute majority of the scholars who participated opposed the use of the concept of Silhak in the large-scale forum held twice for the writing of the publication, the first in Beijing in July 1985 and the second in Chengdu in August 1986 (Jiang 1992, 11). As can be seen here, it is not an exaggeration to say that the entire academic world in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China was in fact skeptical of the viewpoint that understood

The most controversial aspect of the discussion at the roundtable concerned the specific historical and political ideology projected on Silhak of the Ming and Qing periods in China. In the process of studying the thoughts and ideas of the Ming and Qing periods within the frame of enlightenment consciousness or "embryonic capitalism," the so-called Chinese Silhak was interpreted as an enlightenment consciousness reflecting the emergence of capitalism in the Ming and Qing periods and the ideological aspirations of the civic class. In accordance with this line of thought, Professor Ge named the Silhak of the Ming and Qing periods "Silhak of Enlightenment" (see Ge 1989, 1–14). As can be seen here, such concepts as "enlightenment consciousness" and "embryonic capitalism" that were built in the studies of the Chinese Silhak (Chinese Practical Learning) in the 1980s are no different from the slogan of embryonic modernity pursued by Korean Silhak from the early twentieth century. This means that the studies of Silhak conducted in China and Korea share a common point: that of understanding the Confucian thoughts of the past era, using the notion of modernity as the beacon of their theoretical guidance. Since they took modernity as the criterion and framework

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the academic trend of the Ming and Qing dynasties in terms of Silhak, as a specific academic term, not as a general term. Currently, the scope and definition of "Chinese Silhak (Chinese Practical Learning)," discussed in mainland China, varies depending on the individual viewpoint of each scholar. For example, Ge Rongjin (1994, 1–24), who first advocated the notion of "Silhak of Ming and Qing dynasties," applies it back to the Northern Song dynasty while Chen Lai (2019, 319–20) argues that the Yongjia 永嘉 School of Thought, a dominant school of thought during the Southern Song dynasty, can be referred to as "Silhak" in the true sense of the term. These examples suggest that Silhak in China is nothing more than an alias referring to the whole of Confucian thought. In the academia of Hong Kong and Taiwan, however, there is a strong tendency to understand Silhak ("Practical Learning") as a Korean philosophical thought specific to the period of late Joseon dynasty, rather than accepting it as Chinese Silhak ("Chinese Practical Learning") that can be applied to their own country's Confucian thought. This tells that they understand Silhak as an ideological trend that each of the three East Asian countries— China, Japan, and Korea—developed in its own distinct manner, without attempting to extend the concept to encompass the entire East Asian region. This can be cited as one of the reasons why there has been almost no discussion regarding the concept of "East Asian Silhak (East Asian Practical Learning)," even though there has been significant development in the discourses of "East Asian Confucianism" in Hong Kong and Taiwanese academic circles over the past 20 years since the early 1990s.

of reference, the question arose as to whether the Confucian ideology, which emphasizes practical actions in reality and strengthening the Confucian idea of "governing the state and benefiting the people," could be seen as corresponding to the Western idea of modernity, mainly focused on economic growth and enlightenment. This question soon became the core of the critical approach that the East Asian Silhak of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries employed.

The linkage between modernity and Silhak that the studies of Silhak in Korea and China in the twentieth century elaborated on was, in fact, related to the influence of Fukuzawa Yukichi 福澤諭吉 (1835–1901), a well-known Japanese social thinker of the mid-to-late nineteenth century. In his *Gakumon no susume* 學問のすす (An Encouragement of Learning) published in 1872, he criticized traditional studies as being impractical and advocated Silhak, which he thought was closer to ordinary human needs. To be specific, he argued, "a person should learn the 47-letter kana syllabary, methods of letter writing and of accounting, the practice of the abacus, the way to handle weights and measures, and the like" (Fukuzawa [1872] 1993, 20–21). From this quote, it can be seen that the "Silhak" that he advocated means the learning of practical skills that would help people find jobs, such as accounting, engineering, and commerce, as well as the learning for modern industry. Fukuzawa's Silhak was established as the basic definition of East Asian Silhak of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, when the Western powers were expanding their dominance across the globe, and now constitutes the main content of Japanese Silhak ("Japanese Practical Learning").

In the 1970s, Minamoto Ryoen 源了圓 (1920–2020), then Professor at the Faculty of Arts and Letters, Tohoku University, included Kogaku of the Edo period—the Confucian thought that was dominant before the Meiji Restoration—in the category of Silhak in his research on Silhak of the modern era (Ogawa 2005, 1–14). Following this approach, Japanese Silhak was categorized before and after the modern period, i.e., that centered on Confucian thought and that advocated by Fukuzawa Yukichi.[2] However, Ryoen (2000, 15–26) views Kogaku of the Edo

[2] See Ge, Ogawa, and Song (2007).

period as a preparation in the process of advancing to modernity in his explanation about the Japanese modernization process. This proves that it is difficult for Japanese academics to break out of the framework of "Silhak for business," suggested by Fukuzawa Yukichi. Most Japanese people also understand "Silhak" as a term related to modern business and management, which is completely cut off from tradition, accepting Fukuzawa's definition of the term. In contrast, Koreans and Chinese understand Silhak within the scope of traditional Confucian thought, even if they view it as reflecting modern and practical aspects of the world (Han 2004, 211).

IV. Modern Transformation of East Asian Confucian Thought in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

A. Conceptual Confusion between Silhak and Kaozhengxue

In the section above, we examined that the "Silhak" in East Asian Silhak of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries basically means the study of modern business, as defined by Fukuzawa Yukichi. Accordingly, by confirming that modernity, or at least the sprout of modernity, existed in common among Silhak of Korea, Qixue of China, and Kogaku of Japan in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it is possible to justify the concept of East Asian Silhak. From this viewpoint, we can argue that East Asian Silhak of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has a fundamental difference in content from that of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. In other words, East Asian Silhak of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries can be viewed in the same context as Confucian statecraft, while the biggest characteristic and common feature of the study of East Asian Silhak conducted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is the orientation toward Western modernity. Therefore, it would be proper to say that East Asian Silhak of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which pursued Western modernity, as is consistently observed in China, Japan, and Korea, was no longer Silhak ("Practical Learning") formed in the context of Confucianism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Rather,

it represented a "modern transformation of East Asian Confucian thought."

However, if we put the entire thoughts and ideas developed in China, Japan, and Korea for the period of 300 years from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries into the category of East Asian Silhak without such distinction, we will be confronted with quite a few contradictions. One of them is a conceptual confusion. When discussing East Asian Silhak as a whole, we need to consider the following two things about Kaozhengxue 考證學 ("Evidential Learning") of the Qing dynasty of China—which corresponds to Silhak of the late Joseon dynasty of Korea—and its ideological slogan of "seeking truth from facts" (*shishi qiushi* 實事求是).

First, the fundamental nature of Kaozhengxue lies in the way of learning (*zhixue* 治學; chihak in Korean), not in the way of governance (*zhidao* 治道; *chido* in Korean). As seen in the fact that there is almost no one among Korean Silhak scholars who did not present reformative discourses on the state and social systems, such as land use, commerce, tax revenue, and national civil service examinations, the discourse on the way of governance, which focused on policies and measures to govern the country, was the essence and the fundamental characteristic of Silhak of the late Joseon dynasty. Moreover, Korean Silhak scholars' interest in and focus on the way of governance were not limited to the slogan of the local intellectuals; they were promoted and implemented as actual policies under the enthusiastic support of King Jeongjo (1752–1800).

Unlike this, Kaozhengxue is basically the study of *chihak*, which is a methodology of academic research, as evidenced by its slogan, "cultivating learning and loving the ancient, engaging in substantive matters and seeking truth from facts" (*xiuxue haogu, shishi qiushi* 修學好古, 實事求是) (Keum 1999, 146). In addition, if we keep in mind that Kaozhengxue was established semi-forcedly due to the enforcement of "literary inquisition" (*wenziyu* 文字獄; literally, "imprisonment due to writings") (Liang [1924] 2017, 30), we can see that the ultimate goal of Kaozhengxue was from the beginning far from reformist, unlike that of Silhak of the late Joseon dynasty. Certainly, it can be said that its aspect of pragmatic statecraft represented in the demand for social reform in

reality and actions to implement it, which was intensively expressed during the late Ming and early Qing periods, was maintained into the Gongyang scholarship (*gongyangxue* 公羊學) by Zhuang Cunyu 莊存與 (1719–1788), founder of the Changzhou School (*changzhou xuepa*i 常州學派). However, as Liang Qichao 梁啟超 ([1924] 2017, 30–31) pointed out, Zhuang's Gongyang scholarship was only a non-mainstream school of thought that played the role of a kind of "detached force" in the academic history of the Qing dynasty while Kaozhengxue, which made a point of never getting involved in politics, was the mainstream school of thought during the so-called Qianjia 乾嘉 period, the period of the reigns of Emperors Qianlong and Jiaqing (1736–1820). Moreover, considering the fact that the Changzhou School, which had not reached any noticeable development until the nineteenth century, began to influence modern reformist arguments in the nineteenth century, criticizing the non-political nature of Kaozhengxue, it seems implausible to place Silhak of the late Joseon dynasty, which explicitly advocated the social reform in reality, and Kaozhengxue of the Qing dynasty on the same line.

Second, did Liang Qichao really understand Kaozhengxue of the Qing dynasty on the same line as Silhak?[3] In regards to this, we need to take a close examination of his following statement:

> The scholars of the Qing dynasty, centered around the Qianjia school [*qianjia xuepai* 乾嘉學派], opposed the empty discussions of the intellectuals in the Ming dynasty and sought to achieve the goal of the so-called "seeking truth from facts" only by learning and studying in depth from books. In our point of view today, their work can be estimated as at least half futile. For if they had concentrated their energy in a different direction, their achievement would not have stopped there. However, it was due to the limitation of the era, so we should not rebuke them too much. As some of their research spirit and methods can certainly serve as examples for us, we should never belittle them. We can't help but be grateful that they've certainly

[3] Lim Hyung-Teak (2009, 12) stated in his paper titled, "Dongasia silhak-ui gaenyeom jeongnip-eul wihayeo" (For the Establishment of the Concept of East Asian Silhak): "Although Liang Qichao did not use the term 'Silhak' in describing the characteristic of the Qing academics, it can be said that he understood it as such in terms of content."

> already done some of the work we're supposed to do, or opened up a lot of avenues on our behalf.[4] (Liang [1924] 2017, 216)

It is true that Liang Qichao showed consistent respect for the scholars of the Qing dynasty. However, his attitude of respect for traditional learning and whether he really thought of Kaozhengxue as a kind of Silhak are two different issues. In the above quotation, the "different direction" mentioned by Liang means modern science, and modern science is nothing other than "Silhak" in his understanding. Although Liang Qichao called Kaozhengxue "the scientific classical school" and acknowledged the sprout of science embedded in it ([1924] 2017, 27), he noted that Kaozhengxue did not lead to the development of science and considered this as its limitation (22–23). To sum up, Liang did not comprehend Kaozhengxue as Silhak, and what he conceived as Silhak was a modern science that was not only distinguished from, but even opposed to, the strengthened Confucian statecraft.[5] For Liang Qichao, Kaozhengxue was still an "old" school of thought, different from Silhak that he considered modern science.

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[4] The translation is my own.
以乾嘉學派為中堅之清代學者，一反明人空疏之習，專從書本上鑽研考索，想達到他們所謂'實事求是'的目的．依我們今日看來，他們的工作，最少有一半算是白費．因為他們若肯把精力用到別個方向去，成就斷不止此．但這是為時代性所限，我們也不能太過責備．至於他們的研究精神和方法，確有一部分可以做我們模範的，我們萬不可以看輕他．他們所做過的工作，也確有一部分把我們所應該的已經做去，或者替我們開出許多門路來，我們不能不感謝．

[5] For example, in his evaluation of Yan Yuan 顏元 (1635–1704), who occupied an important place in the Qixue of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, Liang Qichao perceived the relationship between traditional Confucian thought and modern learning as conflicting.

> "I cannot help but disapprove of Xizhai 習齋 [Yan Yuan's sobriquet] and his ideas. His *Weixi-zhuyi* 唯習主義 ["Practisim"] shared the same starting point as the modern empirical school, and was originally very close to the spirit of science. However, it is lamentable that he was so bound by the four letters *gu-sheng-cheng-fa* 古聖成法 that he had to learn the practices of the period of Tang-Yu and the Three dynasties [Xia, Shang, and Zhou] and thus fell into the anachronism" (Liang [1924] 2017, 153; My own translation).
> 我們對於習齋不能不稍有觖望者，他的唯習主義，和近世經驗學派本同一出發點，本來與科學精神極相接近，可惜他被'古聖成法'四個字縛住了，一定要習唐虞三代時的實務，未免陷於時代錯誤．

B. The Perspective of Anti-Zhuzi Studies as a Premise for Modernity

When mentioning East Asian Silhak as a concept in which the modern transformation of Confucian thought in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and the reinforcement of Confucian statecraft in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are combined, one problem that needs to be addressed—besides the conceptual confusion that arises between Silhak of the late Joseon dynasty and Kaozhengxue of the Qing dynasty—is the perspective of anti-Zhuzi studies, which cannot help but be taken as a premise as long as the study of the so-called East Asian Silhak of the nineteenth to twentieth centuries has used the pursuit of modernity as a framework for interpretation.

In Fukuzawa Yukichi's *Gakumon no susume* (An Encouragement of Learning) examined above, East Asian traditional thought represented by Confucianism is in fact regarded as useless in society and daily life, and as sharply contrasting with Silhak focusing on practical knowledge and applications. This confrontation is further underlined by Japanese political theorist Maruyama Masao 丸山真男 (1914–1996). In his "Fukuzawa ni okeru jitsugaku no tenkai: Fukuzawa Yukichi *no tetsugaku kenkyū josetsu*" 福沢に於ける「実学」の展開: 福沢諭吉の哲学研究序説 (On the Turn of Fukuzawa's "Silhak": Preface to Studies on Fukuzawa's Philosophy), Maruyama defines in contrast the "core value of the studies from the old system" of Asia, including Kogaku of the Edo period, as ethics, and Fukuzawa Yukichi's Western-oriented Silhak as physics (Masao [1947] 1992, 30). In other words, he argues that Japan's modernity originated from the transition from ethics, Silhak of the Edo period (*Kogaku*), to physics, Silhak of the Meiji period. In his representative work, *Nihon seiji shisoshi kenkyu* (A Study of the History of Japanese Political Thought), he further strengthened his modern view of Silhak through his anti-Confucian, especially anti-Zhuzi studies, stance. He also argued that Ogyu Sorai (1666–1728), the most representative scholar of Kogaku school of the Edo period, had criticized Zhuzi studies for passively accepting the existing political and social order as "nature" and made an "invention" of political and social order based on the emphasis of human subjecthood presiding

over actions. As is well known, in Western history, morality and politics that had been combined in the Middle Ages became separated in the modern period. In this context, it can be said that Zhuzi studies was a medieval feudal ideology in which morality and politics were combined and that, to the contrary, the ideas of Ogyu Sorai moved forward to modernity by separating morality from politics.

In this way, the equation of "Kogaku = anti-Zhuzi studies = modernity" defined by Masao Maruyama actually set the basic direction for the study of Confucian thought in China, Japan, and Korea in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. As this equation was even applied to East Asian Silhak, or the "Confucian statecraft," Zhuzi studies was stigmatized as a symbol of outdated feudalism, old conventions, and even evils that must be defeated in order to realize modernization. Korean Silhak of the late Joseon dynasty, Chinese Qixue of the late Ming and early Qing dynasties, and Japanese Kogaku of the Edo period were certainly different in their emphasis from metaphysical theory-centered Zhuzi studies, particularly in that they clearly put more emphasis on social reform and actions for it than on the theories about the Way of Heaven (*tiandao* 天道) and human nature and destiny (*xingming* 性命). However, even if so, the "reformative action plans" of the three East Asian countries cannot be directly linked to the attempt to lay the stepping stone for modernization by defeating Zhuzi studies. This is because Korean Silhak, Chinese Qixue, and Japanese Kogaku were all born and grew up in the soil of Zhuzi studies and inherit the spirit of Zhuzi studies.

First of all, Dai Zhen 戴震, a representative Qixue scholar famous for the saying, "later Confucians kill people by resorting to *li* 理 ("principle"),"[6] harshly criticized Zhu Xi's philosophy and took *qi* 氣 ("vital forces") as the first core concept of his thought. However, the *qi* that Dai Zhen mentioned does not mean "material" in the modern sense, but rather *qixing* (*qi* nature), like the *qi* in *qihua* 氣化 (*qi* transformation) discussed by Confucian scholars in the Han dynasty (Zheng 2005, 247–77). This means that Dai Zhen was still sticking to the Confucian

6 "聖人之道, 使天下無不達之情, 求遂其欲而天下治. 後儒不知情之至於纖微無憾, 是謂理. 而其所謂理者, 同於酷吏之所謂法. 酷吏以法殺人, 後儒以理殺人, 浸浸乎舍法而論理死矣, 更無可救矣!" (Dai 2009b, 188).

ontology in its traditional sense. In addition, even if Dai eliminated the metaphysical meaning of *tiandao* from *li* and defined it as an objective principle of things,[7] this does not imply that he understood *li* through the lens of natural sciences. As can be seen in his statement, "Whoever speaks and acts in accordance with *li* gains *li*, whereas whoever speaks and acts the other way around loses *li*.[8] It is human nature to like gaining *li* and to dislike losing *li*,"[9] he extended *li* from the level of the principle of natural things to the level of ethical and moral values, but this *li*, defined by him in that manner, still does not deviate from the meaning of moral norms, such as Zhuzi studies. This affirms that the ultimate goal of Dai Zhen's Qixue was toward moral ethics, not toward natural sciences (see Zheng 2009, 225–58).

In the case of Japanese Kogaku, as examined above, Masao Maruyama described Ogyu Sorai as an anti-Zhuzi studies, modern thinker. However, when viewed from the internal perspective of Japanese thoughts, it is not Zhuzi studies that is fundamentally in opposition to Ogyu Sorai's Kogaku, but the Japanese Kokugaku 國學 (National Learning), which completely denied Confucianism and understood Japanese *michi* 道 ("the Way") as the "ancient doctrine," unlike Ogyu Sorai who regarded Chinese *dao* ("the Way") as such (Kojima 2001, 213–52; see also Mogi 2001, 253–88). In the course of the development of Japanese thoughts in the eighteenth century, the confrontation between Ogyu Sorai's Kogaku and the Kokugaku opposing it stemmed from whether or not to accept "Sinocentrism," not Zhuzi studies. Therefore, this confrontation is different in character from that between Zhuzi studies and other currents of thought critical of Zhuzi studies. In addition, considering the fact that Ogyu Sorai denied the possibility that ordinary individuals could become the sages through acquired learning and insisted that only the "ancient sage kings" of Chinese antiquity could be the main agents in solving political problems (Ham 2015,

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7 "理者, 察之而幾微必區以別之名也, 是故謂之分理; 在物之質曰肌理, 曰膝理, 曰文理; (亦曰文縷. 理、縷, 語之轉耳.) 得其分則有條不紊, 謂之條理" (Dai 2009a, 265).

8 "詩曰: '天生烝民, 有物有則; 民之秉彝, 好是懿德.' 孔子曰: '爲此詩者, 其知道乎!' '故有物必有則, 民之秉彝也, 故好是懿德.' 理也者, 天下之民無日不秉持經常者也, 是以云'民之秉彝'. 凡言與行得理之謂懿德, 得理非他, 言之而(已)是、行之而當爲得理, 言之而非、行之而不當爲失理" (Dai 2009c, 357).

9 "好其得理, 惡其失理, 於此見理者, '人心之同然」也'" (Dai 2009c, 357).

337–65), it is somewhat difficult to identify the modern spirit of the West in his thought.

Lastly, the relationship between Korean Silhak and Zhuzi studies cannot be discussed without mentioning the influence of Japanese scholarship. Korean Silhak, which in fact had been under the influence of Japanese Silhak from the mid-to-late nineteenth century until the early twentieth century, maintained "modernity" and "anti-Zhuzi studies" as its main axes of discourses, just as Japanese Silhak did after the Meiji Restoration. That is, just as Maruyama Masao, a leading Japanese political scientist, interpreted Ogyu Sorai's Confucian philosophy as anti-Zhuzi studies and used it as a stepping stone for the discourses of modernization, in the Korean academia it became a mainstream trend to strengthen anti-Zhuzi studies and the modern spirit through studies on the philosophy of Jeong Yak-yong, a renowned Silhak scholar of the late Joseon dynasty. Certainly, there is a big difference between Jeong Yak-yong's philosophy, which does not follow the theory of *li* and *qi*, and Zhuzi studies in the aspect of the discourse on the nature of the heart-mind (*xinxinglun* 心性論). However, this is not because Jeong Yak-yong aimed at modernization, but because his philosophical structure is based on Catholicism, i.e., from the Catholic point of view, the only absolute, universal and eternally unchanging entity in this world is not *li* but *Sangje* 上帝 (God above, *Shangdi* in Chinese) (Gim 2020, 143–73). Moreover, it is safe to say that Jeong Yak-yong's description of the concepts of *daoxin* 道心 (moral mind), *renxin* 人心 (human mind), *dati* 大體 (the nobler moral instinct; literally, the great body), and *xiaoti* 小體 (the sensual self; literally, the small body) actually inherited the theory of self-cultivation in Zhuzi studies. (Gim 2020, 191–98). In this context, Jeong Yak-yong's thought and philosophy have deviated from Zhuzi studies because he did not follow the theoretical structure of it; but it cannot be regarded as "anti-Zhuzi studies" (see Lin, 2016 133–34), since Jeong Yak-yong was not antagonistic to Zhuzi studies for the pursuit of modernization.

V. Conclusion: The Relationship between East Asian New Silhak and Zhuzi Studies in the Twenty-First Century

As examined above, East Asian Silhak—encompassing Korean Silhak, Chinese Qixue, and Japanese Kogaku—which criticized abstract theories concerning the Way of Heaven and "the nature of the heart-mind" (*xinxing* 心性) and emphasized real-world practices and social actions in the seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, can be defined as a Confucian thought that critically inherited Zhuzi studies and strengthened the Confucian statecraft, rather than as a modern thought disconnected from Zhuzi studies. However, as a large share of academic attention was focused on the modern transformation of Confucian thoughts amid the prevalence of discourses on modernity in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the Confucian statecraft strengthened by Korean Silhak, Chinese Qixue, and Japanese Kogaku in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries began to be taken as a pioneering thought that helped in the pursuit of modernization, whereas Zhuzi studies was considered as an old-fashioned feudal thought that should be overcome.

However, entering the 1990s, the last decade of the twentieth century, questions and reflections were raised in relation to the above-mentioned academic trend. In other words, after decades of studying Silhak with the fixed framework of "pursuit of modernity centered on economic growth," voices began to be raised for the "necessity to regain humanity and morality and put the brakes on the endless pursuit of profits" (Lee 2010, 230) in the East Asian academia. Against this backdrop, experts and scholars of China, Japan, and Korea reached a common understanding that Silhak of each of the three countries needed to be discussed together to forge "East Asian New Silhak" befitting the twenty-first century. Here, it is worth noting Lim Hyung-Teak's (2011, 160) discussion of the New Silhak. He argued that it had "significance as a radical reflection on and questioning of the capitalist development logic, that is, the Western-led modernity and modern civilization" (Lim 2011, 147). He also emphasized the "classical humanistic tradition" and the "ideological resources" shared by the three countries, highlighting the Confucian paradigms of "cultivating

the self and governing the people" (*xiuji zhiren* 修己治人) and "inner sage and outer king" (*neisheng waiwang* 內聖外王). His discussion clearly suggests that the direction of East Asian "New Silhak" in the twenty-first century should start from the Confucian point of view based on those paradigms, breaking away from the projection of the nineteenth- to twentieth-century Western modernity onto it.

Taking his discussion one step further, it should be noted that overcoming the modernization-centered bias about East Asian Silhak of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is not different from overcoming the anti-Zhuzi studies perspective and, in other words, that both should be overcame simultaneously. The reason is that in the flow of the modern transformation of Confucian thoughts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Silhak was understood as being disconnected from Zhuzi studies because it was regarded as a modern study in the process of prioritizing certain ideologies demanded by the times. Strictly speaking, New Silhak also relies on the Confucian paradigms of "cultivating the self and governing the people" and "inner sage and outer king" as its basic building blocks, just like Zhuzi studies. Therefore, the key to New Silhak is not to "dismantle" and "reform" the Confucian ideal of "inner sage and outer king" (Lim 2011, 147), but rather to first reestablish the relationship between Silhak and Zhuzi studies through the relationship between "inner sage" and "outer king."

The Confucian ideal of "inner sage and outer king," which was originally derived from the chapter titled "Tianxia 天下" (All Under Heaven) of *Zhuangzi* (Sayings of Master Zhuang),[10] was set as an ideal goal that Confucian scholars should pursue from an early age. The "inner sage" means self-cultivation through which one recovers one's lost good nature, based on moral self-sufficiency—represented by Mencius's argument that "human nature is good" (*xingshan* 性善). The "outer king" means the Way of the king, which is about forming a harmonious human relationship and creating a rational society. In the context of "inner sage and outer king," it can be said that the ideal

10 "天下大亂, 賢聖不明, 道德不一, 天下多得一察焉以自好. . . . 是故內聖外王之道, 闇而不明, 鬱而不發, 天下之人各為其所欲焉以自為方" ("Tianxia 天下" [All Under Heaven], in *Zhuangzi* 莊子 [Sayings of Master Zhuang]).

of Zhuzi studies, which places relatively more focus on cultivating the mind, is close to the "inner sage," while that of Silhak, which emphasizes social practices and institutional improvement, is close to the "outer king." Here is the key to establishing the relationship between Zhuzi studies and Silhak. The "inner sage" and the "outer king" are not in a conflicting relationship in which one cannot become the "outer king" after achieving the ideal of "inner sage" and vice versa. Be that as it may, the relationship is not causal because it is not that one can become the "outer king" only after achieving the state of "inner sage" first, and vice versa. The "inner sage" and the "outer king" are not two independent virtues that are separated from each other, but an inseparable single virtue. These ideals are in a simultaneous relationship in which they mutually imply each other, enabling humans to exhibit their innate good nature in social settings, such as homes, schools, and workplaces (Chen 1995, 23–67). In essence, it is a form of synchronization between the two ideals: if there is an inner king, there must be an outer king, and vice versa.

The same applies to the relationship between Zhuzi studies and Silhak. Zhuzi studies, which puts more focus on the "inner sage," and Silhak, which places more emphasis on the "outer king," are neither in contradiction with each other nor in a causal relationship. Just like the relationship between the "inner sage" and the "outer king," the relationship between Zhuzi studies and Silhak is simultaneous, being based on the same Confucian ideology. Of course, there were sometimes errors in the synchronization between Zhuzi studies and Silhak. However, their simultaneous relationship was not a static state of completion or a process of denial, but a process of revision. In view of this, it can be said that Silhak scholars of China, Japan, and Korea in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries criticized and modified Zhuzi studies to solve the "errors," whereas those of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries tried to permanently delete Zhuzi studies and gave up the synchronization itself. In addition, it needs to be noted that the ultimate goal of the Confucian statecraft in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was not to realize Western-centered modernity, but to "bring peace to all under Heaven" (*pingtianxia* 平天下)—the ideal in which the "inner sage" and the "outer king" coexist.

East Asian Silhak, born out of the strengthened Confucian statecraft in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, has developed through repeated discussions and criticisms as it went through the modern transformation of Confucian thoughts in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Now, if the twenty-first century's East Asian New Silhak takes the inherent Confucian ideology, not the modernity imposed upon the three East Asian countries, as its main axis and establishes a simultaneous relationship between Zhuzi studies and Silhak through the Confucian paradigm of "inner sage and outer king," it will be able to break out of the existing frame of "modern, anti-Zhuzi studies" and fully exert the virtues of Confucianism, which has played a purifying role in society by constantly communicating with the times.

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