

Lee Kyu-joon(李圭駿)'s Study on  
Huangdineijing(黃帝內經)  
in the Late Choson era

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# Lee Kyu-joon(李圭駿)'s Study on Huangdineijing(黃帝內經) in the Late Choson era

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## I. Preface

This paper considers the research of Huangdineijing in Korea, focusing on the Choson era, and in particular Lee Kyu-joon's research. Although Korea has had a long tradition related to Huangdineijing, there was no real research until the second half of the Choson era. During then several scholars studied very deeply Huangdineijing, but their interests were only on certain parts not the book in its entirety. For example Chong Yakyong (丁若鏞), a famous scholar in the 18th century, commented only on the several chapters related to Five Phases (五行) and Four Seas

(四季) pointing out the inconsistency in the correspondence logic of the Five Phases (五行) and the Four Seasons (四季). Another scholar Yun Dongli (尹東里) was interested in only the study of Yunqi theory (運氣學: theory of the circulation of Qi). Lee Kyu-joon, however, was different. He covered the entire content of Huangdineijing. In addition, from his research he arrived at his unique theory of Buyang, encouraging the body's Yang in body to treat diseases. Lee Kyu-joon's theory is significant historically speaking in two ways: first, it is the high point of Korea's Huangdineijing related research development. And second, it can be considered as a Korea originated theory like Sa-Sang-Ui-Hak, created by a contemporary medical scholar, Lee Jema (李濟馬).

## II. The Research Tradition of Haungdineijing in Korea before Lee Kyujoon

When did Korean first have knowledge about Haungdineijing? We can see its first historical mention around A.D. 561. According to Samkuksaki, the history book about the three kingdoms of ancient Korea, Chi Chong (知聰), a Wu(吳) monk, introduced a book called Neiweizhan (內外典) to Kokuryo (高句麗). Many contemporary scholars consider "Neiweizhan" to be the same as "Huangdineijing". The study on Huangdineijing was institutionalized in A.D. 8th century. Establishing an medical education institute, Uihak (醫學), the United Silla included Huangdineijing as one of the main texts. I am sure this institutionalization promoted the systematic study on the book.

In the history of the research on Huangdineijing in China and as well in Korea, the Koryo era (高麗) is very important. I think it was a great event when the Koryo dynasty gave its publication of Lingchujing (靈樞經) to the Song dynasty. Then there were so many different versions of Huangdineiching in China that it was difficult to determine whether what books were accurate or not. The book from Koryo cleared this complicated situation. Even until now the Koryo printing Lingchujing is considered the best.

The study on Huangdineijing had deepened

during the Choson dynasty. The Choson government published the book many times, and many medical scholars used the book as the foundation their medical thinking. {Huangdineijing together with many other medical books had been published several times and} It was a constant source of reference for medical texts like Uibangyouqi (醫方類聚) and more importantly Hur Joon's Donguibogam (東醫寶鑑)<sup>1)</sup> which quotes Huangdineijing on numerous occasions. As Donguibogam became the definitive text on the practice of traditional Korean medicine, the study of Huangdineijing became more essential. Hence, in the second half of the Choson era, research into the theories of Huangdineijing was stressed.

It should be noted that the physicians were not interested in researching the text of Huangdineijing itself but rather looked to it as a starting point of ideas for their clinical practice.

During the 18th century there were many Huangdineijing scholars before Lee Kyujoon, I would like to introduce three of them: Yun Dongli (尹東里), Saamdoin (舍岩道人), and Joeng Yakyong (丁若鏞).

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1) Donguibogam has the color of taoism. One reason is the participant Jungjak (鄭澈) was famous for his high attainment in taoism, and another is the historically deepened relationship between Oriental medicine and taoism. Hur Joon's aim was to make a special book on medicine for practice not for Huangdineijing itself. He used Huangdineijing for composing medical system.

Yun Dongli (尹東里:1705-1784), a researcher on "yunqi theory" (運氣學說), as the result of his long-lasting research on Huangdineijing Suwen, was able to apply "yunqi theory" into actual practice systematically. Saamdoin (舍岩道人), probably Yun's contemporary, included ideas of Huangdineijing in his creation "Saam (舍岩) acupuncture theory." He applied the principles of the Five Phases' interpromoting and interacting relations found in Huangdineijing to his acupuntural theory. I could not find any similar attempts elsewhere in the Oriental medical literature. Unlike the previous two scholars, Jung Yakyoung (丁若鏞) was critical of Huangdineijing. He refused adamantly to accept the Five Phases and Yunqi theories in Huangdineijing because he thought the theories were contradictory to real world phenomena.

Lee Kyujoon, I think, was the most valuable Huangdineijing scholar in the second half of the Choson era. He wrote the book, "Somundaeyo (素問大要)". In this work he criticized strongly his predecessors' medical theories based on Huangdineijing. He insisted that they all misunderstood the right meanings revealed in the Huangdineijing.

### III. Lee Kyujoon's research attitude towards Huangdineijing

Lee Kyu-joon had a profound knowledge of Neo-Confucianism, the dominant philosophy of Korea then. Yet at the same time he had a critical view of it. He did not accept entirely the Neo-Confucianists' commentary on the classics. On the contrary, he tried to correct the dogmatic interpretation of them. So Lee himself wrote somewhat different commentaries on the six important classics: Mao shi (毛詩), Shangshu (尚書), Zhouyi (周易), Chunqiu (春秋), Zhouli (周禮), Yili (儀禮).

We can see such a critical attitude in his Huangdineijing research too. Sometimes Lee modified the content, and even annotated his own commentations to the sentences of Huangdineijing. According to a recent study on the Lee's "Somundaeyo", Lee Kyu-joon made changes in 29 places. This attitude also shows that he did not follow simply the authority of the classics. I think that this critical attitude is the starting point to his original medical thought.

### IV. Buyang theory and Huangdineijing

In "Somundaeyo", Lee offers the theory of Buyang. The theory says that yang-influence is always in shortage while yin-influence is in surplus. "Bu (扶)" means "encourage", "help", and "take good care". "Yang (陽)" me

ans "yang-influence". Although Lee Kyujoon had a critical attitude against all dogmatic Neo-Confucianism, he seemed to have borrowed the term "Buyang (扶陽)" from Zhuxi(朱熹)'s expression "encourage the yang suppress the yin (扶陽抑陰)". We can see the expression in Zhu's commentation on the "Book of Changes (周易)". Zhuxi, a Chinese philosopher of the Song dynasty considered YinYang (陰陽), two constant principles ruling everything, as the foundation of the universe. He also attached value to the two aspects: Yang (陽), governing life, is positive; Yin (陰), governing death, is negative. I am sure that Lee's Buyang theory originated from Zhuxi's "encourage the yang suppress the yin (扶陽抑陰)". Here is an illustrative quote:

"Huangdineijing can be summarized as 'after yang is preserved well, one can be strong'. But how can it be thought that only the Yellow Emperor and Chipó's book [Huangdineijing,] holds this idea. The writing of Fuxi and Wenwang [Book of Changes (周易),] also gives the first consideration to Buyang as well as most of the words of the sages, 'represses what is evil and gives distinction to what is good (遏惡揚善)' [quoted from "Book of Changes"]. If one knows this principle then one knows why hygiene is necessary."

Suggesting the theory that yang-influence

is always in shortage, while yin-influence is always in surplus, he criticized Chinese medical scholars such as Liu's wansu (劉完素) and Zhu's zhenheng (朱震亨), both of whom insisted that one should concentrate on improving yin-influence. Lee considered yang as encouraging life and yin as causing death. For example, he said: "Children might be able to expose their feet in cold weather because they have much Yang-influence. Old men, however, feel their knees cold even in summer because they did not have much Yang-influence. For these reasons, we know that when yang-influence recovers, we live; when it is young, we grow up; when it is in prosperity, we become courageous; when it deteriorates, we get older; when it leaves, we die.", and he also said, "Yang make the Qi (氣), and yin make the body. When one dies it is his breath which leaves, and then the body deteriorates. So how can it be said that yang is always in surplus and yin is in shortage? For these reasons I suggest that yang-influence is always in shortage, while yin-influence is always in surplus. Therefore, I think children can take yang encouraging medicine, and for old men such medicine is essential."

The theoretical foundation of Buyang theory came from Huangdineijing. He had to use the authority of Huangdineijing to justify his theory. That's why he modified or emphasized some important parts which were conn

ected strongly to his Buyang theory. It is interesting to note that he used the authority of the Book of Changes when he modified Huangdineijing. It is arguable that he considered the Book of Changes as the supreme text to uncover the principles of nature.

Lee's Buyang theory somewhat resembles Zhang jiebin's Buyang theory that insisted on growing of Yang-influence. Zhang was a famous Ming dynasty doctor. Lee's thinking, however, was different from Zhang's on at least three points. First, Zhang suggested not only the "shortage of yang-influence", but also asserted the "lack of genuine yin-influence (真陰)". Lee only considered the importance of yang-influence. Zhang frequently prescribed the drug shudihuang (熟地黃) to fill up yin-influence, but Lee, only once mentioned it. Second, Zhang divided "fire (火)" into two groups, one is physiological, "premier fire (相火)", and the other is pathological, "evil fire (邪火)". Zhang admitted to the vice side of fire. However Lee only talked about fire in positive terms. He even explained fever, which is the phenomena of yang, as the evil melancholic phenomena of yin. Third, they differed on the function of the "mingmen (命門)". Zhang thought it governed the both kidneys, but Lee thought it governed the "xinbaoluo (心包絡)".

## V. Conclusion

As we have seen, the research tradition of Huangdineijing is very old. However, the substantial and critical efforts were carried out from the second half of the Chosun dynasty. Lee Kyujoon's research on Huangdineijing is an important example. Not only did he suggest his own opinions, but also amended the book as well. Sometimes he rearranged the content of the book, and other times he modified sentences. This attitude is striking in that he revised the classic scripture which no one dare to change then. It is certain, however, that his work made Huangdineijing more readable book than before, which was his intention.

Not only did he make Huangdineijing more readable, but also he built an original medical theory, named Buyang theory, on the basis of Huangdineijing. Lee did not accept the medical theories of JinYuanshidajia (金元四大家). He criticized them because he thought that they did not work well in actual practice. He claimed that his Buyang theory which cured many patients was much more effective. In other words, Huangdineijing legitimized his Buyang theory in the deepest reference.

Lee Kyujoon's Buyang theory is still alive. He made a school and his many pupils and followers are still obeying the Buyang theory of their "trustworthy" mentor.