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Perspectives on the Horak debate (湖洛論爭): reviews and suggestions

Jonghyun NA, PhD

The Department of History,

Seoul Women's University, South Korea,

621 Hwarangro, Nowon-Gu, Seoul, South Korea,

mett1024@swu.ac.kr

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3364-4935>

Abstract: This paper analyzes the perceptions shared in previous studies by dividing them into two categories and examines how to grasp the Horak debate and the academia of the late Joseon Dynasty. First, the appropriateness of describing the late Joseon academia in terms of the doctrinized Neo-Confucianism and anti-Neo-Confucianism is examined. The consciousness and research methods of the Horon, which are considered to be typical of the doctrinized Neo-Confucianism, was analyzed. Next, whether the political positions of Horon and Rakron before and after the Horak debate can be categorized as conservative or open-minded is examined. The actual political positions of the main debaters of the Horak debate was carefully reviewed. With this discussion, this paper argued that the existing understanding of the Horak debate is largely based on an overly schematic framework, and that it is necessary to move beyond this framework and examine the context of the period in a more nuanced way.

Keywords: Horak debate (湖洛論爭); Horon (湖論); Rakron (洛論); Noron (老論); intellectual history of Joseon.

호락논쟁을 보는 관점: 검토와 제안

초록: 본 논문은 기존 연구의 관점을 크게 두 가지 경향으로 나누어 그 적절성을 살펴보고, 어떻게 호락논쟁과 조선 후기 사상계를 이해할 수 있을지 검토하였다. 먼저, 조선 후기 사상계를 교조화된 주자학과 반 주자학의 대립 구도에서 서술하는 경향에 대해 검토하였다. 특히 일반적으로 교조화된 주자학의 전형으로 받아들여진 호론의 문제의식과 연구 방법에 대해 살펴보았다. 다음으로는 논쟁을 전후하여 호론과 낙론의 정치적 입장을 보수나 개방으로 파악할 수 있는지 검토하였다. 이를 위해 호락논쟁의 주요 논자들의 정치적 성향을 세밀하게 분석하였다. 이러한 검토를 통해 본 논문에서는 호락논쟁에 대한 기존 이해가 지나친 도식화에 근거한 것이며, 이 도식을 넘어서서 당시의 맥락을 세밀하게 분석할 필요가 있다고 주장하였다.

핵심어: 호락논쟁, 호론, 낙론, 노론, 조선후기사상사

Percepcje debaty *Horak* (湖洛論爭): opinie i spostrzeżenia

Abstrakt: Artykuł podejmuje przeglądowo istniejący stan badań nad kontrowersjami wokół debaty Horak i środowiska akademickiego okresu późnego Joseon oraz dzieli je na dwie kategorie. W pierwszej uwzględnia się zasadność opisu środowiska akademickiego okresu późnego Joseon w perspektywie zdoktrynizowanego neokonfucjanizmu oraz anty-neokonfucjanizmu. Analizuje się świadomość i metody badawcze Horon, uznawane za typowe dla zdoktrynizowanego neokonfucjanizmu. Następnie Autor przygląda się próbom kategoryzacji pozycji politycznych Horon i Rakron przed i po debacie Horak jako konserwatywne lub otwarte na inne poglądy. Szczególną uwagę zwrócono na rzeczywiste pozycje polityczne głównych uczestników debaty Horak. W świetle tejsze dyskusji artykuł przychylił się do założenia, że istniejące pojmowanie debaty Horak w głównej mierze opiera się na całościowym schematycznym zrozumieniu, oraz, że koniecznym jest przełamanie ograniczeń tejsze percepcji i przeanalizowanie kontekstu czasowego w świetle istniejących niuansów.

Słowa-klucze: debata Horak (湖洛論爭); Horon (湖論); Rakron (洛論); Noron (老論); intelektualna historia Joseon.

1. Perspectives on the Horak debate

The Horak debate refers to a debate within the Yulgok school in the late Joseon Dynasty over the understanding of human mind and things. Philosophically, it led to the development of Joseon's Neo-Confucianism over issues such as *weifa* (未發), mind of sage and ordinary person and nature of human and other things, and is considered one of the three major debates in Joseon scholarship, along with the Four-seven debate (四端七情論爭) and the Ritual debate (禮訟). It has also attracted the attention of recent scholars because it brought the ideological and political division between the Horon and Rakron. The bifurcation of the debate was a process of deepening the philosophical theory of Neo-Confucianism from an academic point of view, but on the other hand, it was also caused by factors outside of academia, such as the heterogeneity of academic styles based on regional differences and the adjustment to changing realities. These facts illustrate the nature of the Horak debate. Therefore, studies in the field of history have largely focused on the political and social background of the Horak debate and its impact. This has revealed that the Horak debate was basically a disagreement over philosophical concepts, but it was also rooted in differences in political lines surrounding changes in the late Joseon's society (유봉학 Yoo Bong-hack 1995; 조성산 Cho Sung-san 2007).

Based on their different understandings of the philosophical issues at stake in the debate, Horon and Rakron are understood to have developed different directions of economic theory in response to the social changes and reforms of the late Joseon Dynasty. In general, Horon developed a philosophy that recognized the intervention of temperament (氣質) in reality as very important, emphasizing the difference between saints and ordinary people and the difference between human and things. This led to Horon's extreme vigilance against heresy, their socially conservative stance based on a hierarchical view of humanity, their feudal stance that emphasized the interests of the local noblemen (在地土族), and their political intransigence toward the other faction. In contrast to Horon, Rakron is understood to have been socially and politically open-minded, based on their philosophical stance that emphasized the ontological sameness of all things. In particular, it has been noted that a new school of thought called Bukhak (北學), which recognized Qing dynasty as the civilized (中華) rather

than barbarians (夷狄), was able to emerge from the school of open-minded Rakron. This attitude was seen as a significant departure from the strict distinction between the civilized and barbarians in Horon, which was centered on the ‘principle of righteousness’ (義理論). As a result, the Horon school was weakened and lost its influence politically and ideologically, especially as it was cut off from the central government, while the Rakron school is understood to have led the political and ideological circles of Joseon based on the new school of thought (유봉학 Yoo Bong-hack 1998: 68–69).

The academia’s basic perception of the Horak debate goes beyond the evaluation of Horon and Rakron and provides an overall view of the intellectual history of late Joseon. Many studies have noted that new tendencies emerged to explore new thought paths by escaping from Neo-Confucianism as Joseon’s Neo-Confucianism became increasingly dogmatized and conservative in the 17th century. From this research perspective, Horon was recognized as a school representing the doctrinal and conservative Joseon Neo-Confucianism (김준석 Kim, Jun-seok 2003), and on the contrary, Rakron was noted as a school representing a new open trend (조성산 Cho Sung-san 2007). The conservatism of the Horon is a common thread in most studies of the Horak debate. These studies mainly focus on the formation of the ‘open’ school of thought in the Rakron to explain the intellectual history of the late Joseon. In the context of the ‘open’ and ‘conservative’ frame, a historical assessment of the two groups that formed the mainstay of the Horak debate is being made. In particular, rather than exploring the problematic nature of Horon’s and Rakron’s theories, many studies focuses on their political and social ‘reformity’ and ‘conservatism’ in response to social changes in late Joseon.

A recent study pointed out that *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*’s entry on Korean philosophy and Korean study abroad is very positive about the Four-seven debate, stating that it was a very high quality debate and that the emphasis on individual moral responsibility derived from it enabled the respect and protection of each other, which is necessary in this pandemic era, while the Horak debate is negatively evaluated because it emphasizes factional confliction more than the scholarship of the debate (신상후 Shin Sang-who 2023). Although this assessment is somewhat extreme, it is a good example of the contemporary scholarly perception of the Horak debate and the late Joseon academia.

However, through a series of recent studies on the Horak debate,

it has been pointed out that the contrast between conservatism and openness in the previous studies is an analysis through the eyes of later historians and does not represent the actual aspect of Joseon's academia (나종현 Na Jonghyun 2019; 나종현 Na Jonghyun 2020). This paper analyzes the perceptions shared in previous studies by dividing them into two categories and examines how to grasp the Horak controversy and the academia of the late Joseon Dynasty. First, I will examine the appropriateness of describing the late Joseon academia in terms of the doctrinized Neo-Confucianism and anti-Neo-Confucianism. To do so, the problem consciousness and research methods of the Horon, which are considered to be typical of the doctrinized Neo-Confucianism, will be analyzed. Next, I will examine whether the political positions of Horon and Rakron before and after the Horak debate can be categorized as conservative or open-minded. The actual political positions of the main debaters of the Horak debate will be carefully reviewed. Through this, it is expected to contribute to changing the perspective of research on the Horak debate.

2. Is it appropriate to categorize Zhu Jia's orthodoxy and deviationism?

In the 17th century, Song Si-yeol, a representative scholar of the Yulgok school (栗谷學派), claimed that their theory is the orthodoxy of Neo-Confucianism in the midst of a scholarly confrontation with the Toegye school (退溪學派). Therefore, his basic scholarly position was to adhere to and strengthen Yulgok Yi I's theory while understanding both Zhu xi and Yi's theories in an integrated manner. At the time, the criticisms from the Toegye school focused on the fact that Yulgok's theory was heretical, not Zhu's. For example, in 1650, when the idea of worshipping Yi and Sung Hon into a Munmyo (文廟, the Confucian shrine) was discussed, the Gyeongsang-do Jinsha Yujik and others criticized Yi's theory as having originated from Lu Jiu Yuan (陸九淵) and as having the same harmful effects as Buddhist heresy¹. Song Si-yeol's position in response to these attacks centered on declaring that Yi's theory was the orthodoxy of Zhu Xi. Therefore, on the surface,

¹ 『孝宗實錄』 권3, 1650년 (효종 1) 2월 22일 을사 2번째 기사.

Song's views were characterized by adherence to Yi's viewpoint, claiming that Yi inherited the orthodoxy of Zhu Xi's theory. However, when carefully examining Song Si-yeol's philosophical stance, his scholarly tendency was not consistent with the way he thoroughly admired Yi's viewpoint.

The characteristic of Song's thought that adhered to but also developed Yi's view, is well illustrated in his views on the 'four clues' (四端). The four clues had been perceived as morally appropriate emotion. On the contrary, the 'seven sentiments' (七情) had been understood as which likely to flow into evil emotions. In this contrast, the four clues were easily regarded as good emotions that symbolized human good nature, that is, the very basic premise of Confucianism.

During the debate on the four clues and seven sentiments, both Ki Dae-seung and Yi I, the outstanding teachers of the Yulgok schools, raised the possibility that the four clues could not be morally appropriate. In the case of Ki, this was strongly criticized by Yi Hwang, who was the opponent of Ki in the four-seven debate. And Yi I considered the same possibility but did not treat it as a separate topic in his debate with Sung Hon. In other words, at this stage, Ki and Yi I both had considered the possibility of the four clues being 'inappropriate' but did not officially declare. However, if one thoroughly applies the basic propositions of the Yulgok school, the theory of the Kibal-iseung-ildo (氣發理乘一途), to both the four clues and the seven sentiments, the question of the four clues being morally inappropriate naturally arises. This question also arose with Song Si-yeol, the legitimate successor of the Yulgok School:

"I have a separate doubt here, but it is difficult to dare to say. Yi Hwang, Ki, Yi I, and Sung all regarded the four clues as pure and good. However, Master Zhu Xi said that there is also something in the four clues that is not good, but did not all four teachers see this? How is it that there is also something not good in the four clues? It is because also, the four clues are emanated by qi (氣) and li (理) rides on it (氣發理乘). If the qi is clear when it emanates, the li is pure; if the qi is dizzy, the li is obscured."²

² 『宋子大全』 권130, 「朱子言論同異攷」, “愚於此別有所疑而不敢言矣. 退溪高峯栗谷牛溪皆以四端爲純善. 朱子以爲四端亦有不善者,

未知四先生皆未見此說乎. 夫四端何以亦有不善乎. 四端亦氣發而理乘之故也. 發之之時, 其氣清明則理亦純善, 其氣紛雜則理亦爲之所掩而然也.”

<https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=MO#dir/node?grpId=&itemId=MO&gubun=boo>

In his thorough application of Yi I's theory, Song once again raised a point which his academic ancestor had failed to address: the possibility of the four clues being morally inappropriate. Song claimed that if the *qi* is clear, the *li* is pure, and if the *qi* is dizzy, the *li* is obscured and his claim meant the four clues could be morally inappropriate if *qi* was not pure. In the midst of this, Song questioned the fact that his ancestor Yi I and Ki also considered the four clues to be pure. In fact, Ki raised the possibility, but then abandoned it due to Yi Huang's strong criticism, and Yi I did not make it a topic of the debate, so Song Si-yeol understood that they all considered the four clues to be pure. And in line with the school's theory, he argued that these emotions could not be pure. It can be seen that he faithfully inherited the basic position of the Yi I's philosophical theory and strengthened it, while also questioning to Yi I theoretically. This situation, which thoroughly applies the teacher's theory and with the results rather raises questions about the teacher, seems a bit paradoxical but clearly not doctrinaire.

From Song Si-yeol to his academic successor Han Won-jin, the possibility of the four clues being inappropriate was formalized. Han Won-jin denied the view that the four clues was pure and tried to apply the same standard with the seven sentiments. In other words, the inheritors of Yulgok's theory were developing their logic in the direction of affirming the possibility of the four clues being inappropriate, while thoroughly adhering to the propositions set forth by their academic ancestor. This behavior was applied to various concepts, which eventually became the subject of the Horak debate. A typical example is the controversy over *weifa* (未發, 'not yet emanated').

In the theory of Neo-Confucianism, maintaining the state of appropriate (中) in the stage of *weifa* (未發) and achieving harmony (和) in the stage of *yifa* (已發, 'already-emanated') are the key factors in the self-cultivation (修養). Park Sang-hyun, a student of Song Si-yeol, defined the appropriate (中) as a state in which both *li* (理) and *qi* (氣) are pure, and argued that only when the *weifa* is pure does the stage of *yifa* achieve harmony, and if the *weifa* is not pure does the state of *yifa* fail to achieve harmony³. A pure *weifa* means that the *li* (理) and *qi*

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³ 『寓軒集』 권2 「上尤菴先生(丁巳六月)」, “中庸曰喜怒哀樂之未發謂之中,

(氣) are pure and tranquil, achieving the state of the appropriate. According to this logic, if the *li* and *qi* are not pure, the *weifa* is not pure, and therefore in the stage of *yifa* will not achieve the harmony (和). In other words, Park Sang-hyun argued that the *weifa* may not be pure because of the *qi*, and in that case, the *yifa* will not achieve the harmony either.

Park's logic that the state of the *weifa* could change depending on the temperament (氣質) of the person, was the result of a rigorous application of the Yulgok school's view, which understood all things to be composed of *li* and *qi* and the human mind is also made of *qi*. Despite the fact that Park's logic was not against the propositions of the Yulgok school, Song Si-yeol disagreed with Park's view. Song saw no need to mention *qi* in the state of appropriate in the *weifa*, because he concerned that if one were to apply *qi* in the state of appropriate, as Park did, one would be committing a grave error by undermining the long-standing tradition and basic premise of Confucianism: "the human nature is good (性善)":

"In general, the appropriate (中) describes the virtues of human nature. Although human nature does not exist in isolation from *qi*, when the sages spoke of the human nature, they always revealed only one aspect of *li* in the midst of *qi*. And it seems unreasonable for you to mention the appropriate with *qi*."⁴

Song Si-yeol criticized Park Sang-hyun's definition of the state of the appropriate as a state in which both *li* and *qi* are pure, saying that

發而皆中節謂之和。所謂中也，理氣純粹而寂然不動之謂也，所謂和也者，隨其所感而無過不及之謂也。是故未發者純粹則所發者和，未發者雜糅則所發者不和矣。”

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4 『宋子大全』 권113 「答朴景初(丁巳六月十八日)」 別紙, “蓋中者, 狀性之德也。所謂性者, 雖非舍氣獨立之物, 然聖賢言性者, 每於氣中拈出理一邊而言, 今便以氣並言者, 恐未安.”

https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=MO#dir/node?grpId=&itemId=MO&gubun=book&depth=5&cate1=Z&cate2=&dataGubun=%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%A0%95%EB%B3%B4&dataId=ITKC_MO_0367A_1150_010_0080. (Accessed January, 31, 2024).

it was contrary to the tradition of Confucianism. To Song, the appropriate is not a matter of *li* and *qi*, but an important concept that symbolizes the virtues of human nature. Song argued that the discussion of human nature in the tradition of Confucianism has always emphasized the aspect of *li*, and that the aspect of *li* should also be emphasized in the state of appropriate in *weifa*. In Song's view, Park's logic of explaining *weifa* in relation to *qi* was incompatible with the most basic premise of Confucianism. However, the logic of Park Sang-hyun, which Song Si-yeol strongly criticized, can be seen even more clearly in the philosophical works of Kwon Sang-ha and Han Won-jin, ironically who are considered as Song Si-yeol's legitimate successors.

The key point of Kwon Sang-ha's view of human nature was that human nature in reality is limited by individual temperament (氣質). According to Kwon's view, the original human nature (本然之性) that is said to be shared by all human and things, could be conceptually possible only when referring to just *li* (理) alone, but in reality, in which *li* (理) and *qi* (氣) coexist together, this original human nature is also limited to temperament. It was quite different from what many scholars thought because they only thought of connecting the original human nature with *li*. In Kwon's philosophical works, the role of temperament was emphasized not only in the human nature, but also in the stage of *weifa*. His views on the human nature and the stage of *weifa* shows that his works were not just imitation of his master Song's.

Kwon Sang-ha's disciple, Han Won-jin was a leading figure in the Horak debate through his argument with Yi Gan, who was Kwon's another outstanding disciple but had quite different view from his master. Han argued that since *qi* is clearly present even in the stage of *weifa*, it is possible to speak of the temperamental human nature (氣質之性) from this stage on. That was an argument which Han's academic forefather Song would strongly disagreed with.

Han Won-jin's view, which understands the *weifa* in relation to *qi*, is in line with the arguments of Park Sang-hyun, whom Song Si-yeol had strongly criticized⁵. Yi Gan, on the other hand, argued that the *weifa*

5 『南塘集』 권30 「本然之性氣質之性說」, “其在人者以心言之, 則心即氣也, 性即理也. 未發之前, 理具氣中, 故專言理則渾然至善, 而所謂本然之性也, 兼言氣則善惡一定, 而所謂氣質之性也. 已發之際, 理乘氣上, 故其善其惡, 固皆氣質之性所發, 而其善者, 乃本然之性, 不為氣揜者也, 其惡者, 乃本然之性, 為氣所揜者也. 然則氣質之性所發, 即本然之性所發也.”

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is pure good and that the original human nature (本然之性) should be seen in it, and criticized Han's view that temperamental human nature exists in the state of *weifa*. Because it implies that good and evil coexist in the *weifa*, which should symbolize the virtue of the good human nature⁶. In the debate between the disciples, their master Kwon raised Han's hand. He recognized Han Won-jin's view, because he thought that there is no good or evil in the *weifa*, but that the temperament (氣質) in the *weifa* becomes the sprout of good and evil in reality⁷.

The issue of the four clues and the *weifa* means that the logic of the Horon school cannot be understood simply as dogmatization. Dogmatization is the belief in and following of certain ideas as unchanging truths, and in the case of Yi I, Song, Kwon and Han, there were repeated instances in which they denied the master's logic at the same time while reinforcing the master's theoretical premises. The academic goal of the Horon scholars was to apply their own scholarly tradition firmly and to expand it further, and in doing so, to argue strongly for things that their masters had not considered, and sometimes even for things that the master had flatly rejected. It is doubtful that the

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⁶ 『巍巖遺稿』 권12 「未發有善惡辨」, “然則未發之體, 當論於所拘所蔽, 有時而昏者乎. 抑當論於本體之明, 有未嘗息者乎.” 『巍巖遺稿』 권12 「未發辨」, “今援此合彼, 打成膠漆, 畢竟湛然裏面, 純昏依舊, 本體裏面, 眞惡自在, 所謂天下之大本何如是汨襍也.”

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⁷ 『寒水齋集』 권13 「答李公舉(壬辰七月)」, “頃年高明問曰未發時亦有善惡乎. 愚答曰五性感動之後, 善惡出矣. 未發之時, 寧有善惡之可言者乎. 高明笑曰果然矣. 未發時有善惡之云, 是德昭之見也. 愚以爲如此則德昭誤矣. 其後德昭之來, 叩其所見, 儘不然矣. 其意蓋謂有生之初, 便有氣質之性, 清濁粹駁, 有萬不齊, 其本領之美惡如此, 故爲發後淑慝之種子, 非謂未接物時惡念常存於心也.”

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act of changing the scholarly tradition inherited from one's master, rather than merely accepting it, can be understood as dogmatization. It is necessary to read more closely the situation in the world of thought at the time.

3. Is the distinction between conservative and open-minded appropriate?

The Horak debate was not limited to philosophical discussions, and it is understood that it also had significant political implications as it was linked to political faction. Generally, Rakron is politically categorized as moderates, whereas Horon is categorized as hardliners. Based on the philosophical ideologies presented in the Horak debate, the Horon school was likely to form a divisionist ideology, while the Rakron school was likely to form an integrationist ideology. Within this general understanding, those who sympathized with the philosophical position of Rakron were often seen as having the potential to end the factional conflict, to provide a philosophical platform for reconciliation with the barbarians, and to contribute to the elimination of discrimination in society. However, these possibilities were just the expectation of modern researchers. The actual political positions of the main debaters of the Horak debate did not differ much.

The early 18th century, when the Horak debate took place, was a politically sensitive time for Noron faction. Philosophically, there was a fierce debate between Horon and Rakron. Politically, however, both schools belonged to a faction called Noron. In the 18th century, the conflict between the factions intensified and in particular, Noron had a massive political war with Soron, who was the same faction a decade ago. The death of Noron's Song Si-yeol in 1689 due to the Kisa-hwanguk (己巳換局), and the Sinim-oksa (辛壬獄事), which greatly harmed Noron in the reign of King Gyeongjong, further clarified Noron's political position. The logic of Noron's criticism of Soron in this period is summarized in that Soron betrayed own master and disobeyed the king.

Yun Jeung, one of the founders of Soron, was originally a disciple of Song Si-yeol, who represents Noron. However, he confronted his teacher over various issues, eventually leading to a

political split. Noron criticized Yun's feud with his teacher Song and his subsequent betrayal and attack on his teacher as an act of treachery, while they emphasized that Soron's attack on the crown prince (later King Yeongjo) and Noron during King Gyeongjong's reign was disloyalty to both King Gyeongjong and Yeongjo.

Han Won-jin, who represented the logic of Horon in the Horak debate, argued that in order to eliminate the abolition of the faction, it was necessary to declare the loyalty of Noron and to punish the traitors to Gyeongjong. He understood that since King Yeongjo was enthroned, the disposition was not clear and the punishment was not strict, so the people misunderstood that the evil side also had a great righteousness, which caused the country to be upset. Therefore, the country would be at peace from top to bottom only if the punishment of the traitors in the Gyeongjong's reign was clearly decided in advance⁸.

According to Han, the punishment of traitors is not merely an act of political appeasement by the Noron, but a crucial factor related to the existence of the basic moral principle (彝倫) and the Confucianism. If the traitors are allowed to participate in the Tangpyong, King Yeongjo's political agenda which declare the end of the factions, without strictly punishing them, the basic moral principle will not be able to spread and the Confucianism will not be dignified, causing the civilized (中華) to become the barbarians (夷狄) and mankind to become beasts⁹. The act of proclaiming the political merits of the Noron

⁸ 『南塘集』 권2 「丙午擬陳所懷疏」, “殿下即位之後, 處分不明, 懲討不嚴, 故國人疑其建儲代理, 或不能出於正, 而彼輩指以爲逆者, 亦有大義之所執. 故主上亦不得以私意誅之也. 於是不能無疑於逆順, 名實之際, 不能無疑也. 故民志不定, 民志不定, 而主勢不尊, 主勢不尊, 而國家之禍, 有不可勝言矣. 欲尊主勢, 當先定民志, 欲定民志, 當先正其名, 正名之道, 只在乎明建儲代理之出於光明正大, 必不可已之舉, 而亟正羣兇懷貳心動國本之罪, 以致之法, 而戮其巨魁, 寬其黨與, 則法行而恩加, 名正而言順, 國人皆曉然於逆順之分, 而民志定於下, 主勢尊於上矣.”

https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=MO#dir/node?grpId=&itemId=MO&gubun=book&depth=5&cate1=Z&cate2=&dataGubun=%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%A0%95%EB%B3%B4&dataId=ITKC_MO_0491A_0020_010_0030. (Accessed January, 31, 2024).

⁹ 『南塘集』 권2 「丙午擬陳所懷疏」, “天地之所賴以立, 人物之所恃以生者, 惟道而已. 道之興廢, 實係乎彝倫之叙不叙道學之尊不尊. 而彝倫不叙, 道學不尊, 則人心僻違, 天地閉塞, 中國而淪於夷狄, 人類而入於禽獸矣, 可不懼哉.”

<https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=MO#dir/node?grpId=&itemId=MO&gubun=boo>

was set as an important criterion for distinguishing between the civilized and the barbarians, mankind and beasts. Therefore, Han identified the biggest problem of scholars of his time as ‘not distinguishing’ (無分). The problem of ‘not distinguishing’ is divided into three major categories: not distinguishing of mankind and beasts, not distinguishing of Confucianism and the heresies, and not distinguishing of the civilized and the barbarians. Han Won-jin warned that these three problems of not distinguishing would cause infinite harm to the Confucianism¹⁰. Han’s political logic of being right has been understood to be very exclusive attitude of other political parties, and it has been recognized by modern scholars as a typical example of the exclusivity of the Horon (김준석 Kim Jun-seok 2003: 388–441)

So, would Yi Gan, who disagreed with Han Won-jin philosophically, have opposed Han politically by being open to other political factions? The answer is ‘no, not at all’. Yi Gan also strongly insisted that the traitors, which meant Soron, should be punished thoroughly. In 1724, Yi Gan raised a petition to reveal that Song Si-yeol and Kwon Sang-ha were innocent and insisted that those who framed the great masters should be punished. When Soron was more politically powerful, they had fiercely criticized Noron’s two masters, Song and Kwon. In this appeal, Yi Gan’s political stance is clearly revealed. Yi Gan defined the royal punishment for two masters as the fact that the rulers had punished good people in the name of evil, falling into the twisted hands of the wicked¹¹. While he praised Song Si-yeol and Kwon

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¹⁰ 『南塘集』 권20 「答權亨叔(丁卯八月)」, “今之學者, 以人物之性, 謂同具五常, 是人獸無分也. 釋氏曰心善, 而儒者亦曰心善, 是儒釋無分也. 推尊許衡, 以爲聖門眞儒, 旣以爲眞儒, 則當學其人, 是華夷無分也. 此三說者, 將爲吾道無窮之害.”

https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=MO#dir/node?grpId=&itemId=MO&gubun=book&depth=5&cate1=Z&cate2=&dataGubun=%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%A0%95%EB%B3%B4&dataId=ITKC_MO_0491A_0200_010_0120. (Accessed January, 31, 2024).

¹¹ 『巍巖遺稿』 권3 「代士林辨尤菴遂菴兩先生被誣疏」, “因竊惟念, 奸孽之禍人家國, 輒以惡逆二字, 籠罩善類, 而後乃肆其誅夷斬伐, 人無由得脫, 費持箝制, 世莫敢誰何. 此宵小輩千古熟套承用妙計, 而至以此移上一層, 操縱得逼於不敢言之地, 則臣等歷稽史牒, 僅見於今日廷臣矣.”

Sang-ha for becoming the masters of the whole country and for having been treated with respect and kindness by the two kings, Sukjong and Gyeongjong, he criticized the Soron as a group that originated from the Yun Jeung, who seriously violated the moral cords of that time. In doing so, Yi Gan revealed a perception of the times similar to Han's 'not distinguishing'. Yi Gan argued that the great legacy of Song Si-yeol and Kwon Sang-ha enabled Joseon to honor the Confucianism and reject heresy, hold the civilized close and hate the barbarians, and exalt the lord and defeat the traitors¹².

If the first half of the Horak debate was centered on Han Won-jin and Yi Gan, who were the disciples of Kwon Sang-ha together, the second half of the debate developed into a confrontation between Horon and Rakron in earnest. The representative scholar of Rakron was Yi Jae. After Yi Jae's disciple Choi Seok visited Han Won-jin and asked for a debate, but was refused, Yi Jae and Han Won-jin expressed their views in the form of poetry and criticized each other's thought. However, in contrast to their clear philosophical opposition, Yi's political stance as the head of the Noron was very similar to that of Han Won-jin.

Yi Jae insisted that the monarch's mind is the source of all things, and from here, the royal court is corrected and the whole country is corrected. To detect the signs of public/private, righteous/evil, right/wrong and gain/loss in a monarch's heart, to eliminate human desires, and to realize the principle of heaven, is the fundamental way to correct the all affairs. For Yi Jae, the moral act of correcting the king's heart eventually led to the concrete political acts of the declaration of righteous and evil, and the proclamation of Noron's loyalty to punish those who had sinned in the past in the way of great public justice. He insisted on doing the right thing and dealing with the wrongdoers clearly,

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¹² 『巍巖遺稿』 권3 「代士林辨尤菴遂菴兩先生被誣疏」, “盖先正平生所服事者, 朱子之學也, 所擔負者, 春秋之義也. (중략) 而至於環東一域, 式至今日, 猶知夫宗朱而斥鑄, 內夏而外夷, 尊君父討亂賊, 得免於禽獸者, 伊誰之力歟.”.

https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=MO#dir/node?grpId=&itemId=MO&gubun=book&depth=5&cate1=Z&cate2=&dataGubun=%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%A0%95%EB%B3%B4&dataId=ITKC_MO_0477A_0030_010_0040. (Accessed January, 31, 2024).

without fear of appearing to have a personal interest in the case¹³. If the ruler distinguish the right and wrong and shows example and submits the hearts of the people, it will eventually become a factor in achieving the state of *tangpyong* (蕩平), which means there is no faction and the ideal politics unfolds, but if the ruler fails, he will end up promoting evil while claiming to edify the wicked¹⁴. Politically, we can clearly see that Yi Jae, the representative of Rakron, showed a strong exclusion of other faction.

Politically speaking, it is hard to say that the main debaters in the Horak debate had distinctly different positions. This was also evident in their social reform theory. Han Won-jin's social reform theory, representing Horon, was usually perceived as conservative, representing the interests of the local noblemen (在地士族). However, this perception is based on preconceived notions of Horon, which are often very different from the real history.

Previous research has found direct evidence of his hierarchical views in Han Won-jin's famous statement, "If there is no distinction between upper and lower, it is like knowing a child as a father and the father as a child"¹⁵, and compared this strict view of hierarchy to the

¹³ 『陶菴集』 권6, 「入城後陳所懷疏」, “然人君一心, 萬化之源, 君心正則朝廷正, 朝廷正則萬方正, 此理之必然. (중략) 甚至一念之頃, 公私邪正是非得失之機, 未嘗不分明角立, 交戰於其中, 而終是人欲勝而天理負矣. 此非臣妄度. 生於其心, 害於其政, 發於其政, 害於其事.”
https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=MO#dir/node?grpId=&itemId=MO&gubun=book&depth=5&cate1=Z&cate2=&dataGubun=%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%A0%95%EB%B3%B4&dataId=ITKC_MO_0485A_0060_010_0150. (Accessed January, 31, 2024).

¹⁴ 『陶菴集』 권6, 「入城後陳所懷疏」, “殿下苟能痛析是非, 昭示典刑, 處置得宜, 大服人心, 使皆知惡之可羞善之可慕, 則彼將悔舊圖新, 偕之蕩平之域. 而殿下不惟不能討罪, 輒於是非源頭, 含糊而蕩汨之, 忠逆不分, 名實相戾, 善者何所勸, 惡者何所懲, 紀綱何由而立, 習俗何由而變哉. 是則聖上所欲化其惡者, 適所以長惡, 所以紿黨禍者, 適所以益禍, 此豈聖上仁之之道乎.”
https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=MO#dir/node?grpId=&itemId=MO&gubun=book&depth=5&cate1=Z&cate2=&dataGubun=%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%A0%95%EB%B3%B4&dataId=ITKC_MO_0485A_0060_010_0150. (Accessed January, 31, 2024).

¹⁵ 『南塘集』 권28 「李公學上師門書辨」, “天命之謂性, 猶父生之謂子, 命之屬天, 猶生之屬父. 父子雖是一氣, 若喚父爲子, 喚子爲父, 則不亦名分之紊亂而倫理之倒置乎. 今謂命卽性性卽命而無上下之辨, 則直是父其子子其父之類

open-minded perceptions of the Rakron, which was optimistic about the possibility of edification of all classes (조성산 Cho Sung-san 2007: 278–279). At first glance, this analysis might seem to make sense, given that Han Won-jin’s philosophy emphasized fundamental differences, while Rakron’s philosophy focused on the same possibilities of the all human being’s mind. However, this passage was not written by Han Won-jin to explain his hierarchical view of identity. When Han Won-jin says that the distinction between upper and lower should not be disturbed and likens it to the relationship between a father and a son, he is trying to convince us of his philosophical view that the heaven’s order (天命) and the human nature (本性) should not be understood as the same concept.

Rather, Han Won-jin’s strong advocacy of the *Hopo* (戶布, a hemp cloth as a prescribed tributary payment from each householder) in the debate over the reforming of military tax system, which was one of the major social issues of his time, revealed a rather open-minded view of social ranks. Han Won-jin argued that everyone in the household from the loyal (公卿) at the top to the common people at the bottom, should be pay a hemp cloth for their military duty¹⁶. Some may read a hierarchical perspective into Han’s approach to talking about noble and common. However, Han’s logic that the noble pay taxes, so the common people won’t complain, was not intended to advocate for hierarchical order, but rather to emphasize that no one would complain only if everyone, even those of high status, pay taxes evenly. In fact, Han goes so far as to argue that they should be able to abandon even the honor of the noble in order to implement the *Hopo* system.

也.”.

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¹⁶ 『南塘集』 권5 「經筵說上」, “我國田役則均矣, 而身役不均, 戶役則全闕矣. 我國民戶之數, 較之出布之軍, 其數十餘倍矣. 上自公卿, 下至賤隸, 有戶者皆出布, 一人之役, 十餘人分應, 則役輕而均, 行之甚易. 公卿出布則士無所怨, 兩班出布則民無所怨矣.”.

https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=MO#dir/node?grpId=&itemId=MO&gubun=book&depth=5&cate1=Z&cate2=&dataGubun=%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%A0%95%EB%B3%B4&dataId=ITKC_MO_0491A_0050_010_0010. (Accessed January, 31, 2024).

In response to an opponent's view that implementing the *hopo* system might undermine the honor of the superior, Han Won-jin argued that the maintenance of the honor did not depend on the burden of a single sack of tax cloth or a single grain of rice, but rather on the ruler's basic conduct and ability to cultivate virtue, stabilize the people, and impress the hearts of the people. He strongly argued that the *hopo* system must be enforced to reform the abolition of the military tax system, on which the nation's survival depended, even if it actually undermined the honor¹⁷.

Whether the *Hopo* system was in fact the most efficient and open solution, and whether Han Won-jin's arguments were based on a clear understanding of the realities of his time, are too vast topics to cover in this article. However, Han Won-jin's statement that he could not help but compromise the honor by advocating for the *Hopo* system seems to raise the question of whether his social reform theory was based on hierarchical identification, as assumed in previous studies.

In terms of politics, the main debaters in the Horak debate shared the position of declaring the loyalty of Noron and strongly chastising Soron. In addition, if we look specifically at Han Won-jin's social reform theory, which usually has been perceived as conservative, it seems that the previous studies have mechanically substituted Han's arguments in an overly schematic framework. If so, we can question the basic way of looking at the Horak debate and understanding the intellectual history of late Joseon.

¹⁷ 『南塘集』拾遺 卷2 「良役變通議」, “且維持名分之道, 亦在乎修德政安民物, 以服國人之心而已. 不此之謀, 反欲恃尺布斗米之不出於凡民之所出者, 以爲正名分之計, 豈不迂哉. 設或有損於名分, 爲大事者, 不顧細故, 古之忠臣, 苟有利於國家者, 身體髮膚, 亦有所不愛. 今者良役之弊, 將召亡國之禍, 而其可以變通者, 惟在戶布, 則爲生民爲國家, 建此大計者, 寧可復有所顧愛者乎. 況其名分之加損, 元不繫此者乎.”.

https://db.itkc.or.kr/dir/item?itemId=MO#dir/node?grpId=&itemId=MO&gubun=book&depth=5&cate1=Z&cate2=&dataGubun=%EC%B5%9C%EC%A2%85%EC%A0%95%EB%B3%B4&dataId=ITKC_MO_0491A_0400_030_0010. (Accessed January, 31, 2024).

4. Conclusion

In the preceding discussion, I have argued that the existing understanding of the Horak debate is largely based on an overly schematic framework, and that it is necessary to move beyond this framework and examine the context of the period in a more nuanced way. I am not alone in arguing that the way we view the Horak debate is closely linked to the conventional view of the intellectual history of late Joseon, and that it needs to be revisited. For example, many questions have been raised about Silhak (實學), which has been recognized as a typical reformist idea of the late Joseon Dynasty. However, on the other hand, it also raises the question of how to replace the macroeconomic framing of existing research with a new one.

While it is clear that the schematic dichotomy of conservative and open-minded is over-represented in the previous studies, it is also undeniable that we could be able to establish the historical significance of the Horak debate by those studies. The previous studies has allowed us to reevaluate the debate not as a speculative axiomatic discussion, but as closely connected to the political and social outlook of each scholarly group, and it has also provided a clearer picture of the historical role of Neo-Confucianism in Joseon Dynasty as an idea that guided medieval society. How to evaluate the historical significance of the Horak debate and the Joseon's academia based on a new understanding of the debate is the challenge for new researchers today.

So how should we approach the Horak debate? First, we need to carefully examine the social implications of the philosophical debates of the time, rather than prejudging the nature of the academic groups. At its core, the Horak debate was a discussion of human individuality and sameness. This was very close to the goal of Neo-Confucianism, which was to build an ideal society through individual morality, and on the other hand, the debate was about the awareness of individuality of individuals who were growing as social subjects. These connections need to be carefully examined. Next, it is necessary to examine the meaning of the Horak debate in the context of East Asian intellectual history and world history beyond Joseon. The debates in other cultures about the moral and social possibilities of the individual in a broader perspective should be also reviewed. These methods will allow us to understand the Horak debate more broadly.

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