Exploring the Chunqiu Studies in Chosŏn Korea

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Abstract

The Chunqiu (Spring and Autumn Annals 春秋) stands among the Five Confucians Classics, the first chronology of Chinese history documenting events and dialogues within the court of Lù (722–479 BCE). In the Confucian tradition, the study of the Chunqiu is crucial not only due to its conventional attribution to Confucius but also for encapsulating the essence of good government. Founded on the basis of Neo-Confucianism, Chosŏn Korea also directed scholarly attention to Chunqiu studies. This talk aims to highlight the distinctive features of Chosŏn’s Chunqiu scholarship while acknowledging its shared research trajectory with China. First, the Chosŏn court initiated a series of Chunqiu commentaries, rectifying errors both in form and content in contemporary Chinese versions. The state-led endeavors not only attest to Chosŏn’s academic prowess and excellence but underscore the originality of its Chunqiu research. Second, the Chunqiu scholarship is the archetype of the development of Korean philosophy. Initially, scholars mainly focused on re-organizing or complementing existing commentaries. Then their attention shifted to critically reviewing previous studies and proposing new interpretations. In the final stage, the study of the Chunqiu diverged into two paths: on the one hand, fostering the originality of Chosŏn’s Chunqiu scholarship by deviating from the dominant, Neo-Confucian strand and, on the other hand, completing the Neo-Confucian account of the Chunqiu by synthesizing the theories of Zhu Xi and Hu Anguo.

About the Speaker

Dong-min Kim is an Associate Professor in the Department of the College of Confucian Studies and Eastern Philosophy at Sungkyunkwan University, Korea, where he earned his Ph.D. in Eastern philosophy. His research interests lie in the study of Confucian Classics, especially the Korean tradition of Confucian classical studies. He is the author of 春秋論集 [Discussions on the Spring and Autumn Annals] (2014). He also translated several important scholarly works into Korean, such as Chunqiu Gongyang Xueshi [A History of the Studies on the Chunqiu in the Gong Yang Tradition] by Zeng Yi and Guo Xiaodong, Kongzi Gaizhikao [Confucius as a Reformer] by Kang Youwei, and 漢代思想の研究 [A Study of Han Thought] by Toshikuni Hihara. All of his publications are in Korean.