

Completion Report

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Subject of Research Project : A study on phrasing Yomeigaku in Modern Japan and Joseon-Focusing on Japan Kodikai and the Joseon Confucians

The outline of this research is as follows:

First, previous studies related to the Busan branch of the Nihon Kodokai, established in 1897, all mistakenly consider it as the only branch in Korea. However, it has been confirmed that following the establishment of the Busan branch, the Keijo branch was established in 1918.

Second, individuals such as Aranami Heijiro, the principal of the Kaeseong School founded in 1896, were also the second chairman of the Busan branch of the Kodokai. Considering their involvement in the educational activities of our Kodokai's Kodochu Middle School (established in 1899), it is worth examining their role in the history of education in Busan.

Third, although direct evidence connecting the teachings of Yangming School, Korean Confucianism, and the Nihon Kodokai Busan branch, which was the initial concern, has not yet been found, intriguing perspectives have emerged. Research on Nishimura Shigeki, the founder of the Nihon Kodokai, has emphasized his "nationalism," overlooking his concepts of "benevolent government(人政)" and "concern for the people(安民)." Studies on the Confucian circles in colonial-era Korea have tended to focus on Confucian groups that actively contributed to the education of "pro-Japanese" individuals nurtured by the Korean Governor-General.

However, what deserves attention is the comparison between the self-reformation of Confucianism and the evolving Confucian perspectives of nationalist and "anti-Japanese" intellectuals like Nishimura. For example, Park Eon-sik, an enlightened intellectual on the surface, highly values Yangming School during the Meiji era but criticizes Korean Confucianism. While Nishimura does not directly refer to Yangming School, he emphasizes the concept of "conscience" and advocates for the ruler's "lifetime commitment" using concepts similar to Yangming School. In a transitional period when the paradigm of the era is changing, and under the imminent pressure from Western powers, studying the "Confucian enlightenment discourse of national consciousness" from a new perspective of "intellectuals dedicated to the inheritance and innovation of tradition" carries important significance not only in terms of the continuity and discontinuity of traditional thoughts but also in comparing the transformation of Confucianism, a "common element" shared by the contrasting social systems of the Japanese feudal system and the Yangban bureaucratic system in Korea. This analysis allows us to observe the divergence between Nishimura's Confucian perspectives gradually leaning towards "Huangdao Confucianism" and the failure of the Korean Confucian revival movement, which advocated Confucian reform while praising Japanese Yangming School but ultimately moved towards a religious orientation, in their pursuit of "modernization."

The Activities of the Nihon Kodokai in Korea and Korean Enlightened Intellectuals, Konkuk Univ. Asia Contents Institute, 2023.6.10.

Yangming School in Modern Korean Enlightened Intellectuals – Regarding the Nihon Kodokai The Korean Society of Yang-ming Studies, Scheduled for 2023.12.15