Confucian Tradition and the Challenges of Trust and Accountability*

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This paper explores the relevance of culture for understanding the quality of governance in contemporary Korea. Beginning with definitions and dimensions of national culture, the paper gives a systemic description of the values and attitudes of contemporary Koreans. The effect of contemporary political culture on democratic performance is illustrated with an example of failed economic reforms before the 1997 economic crisis. Although some problems such as lack of pragmatism are of Confucian origin, others, especially, the lack of accountability, transparency or trust, cannot be attributed to Confucian tradition. Indeed, the paper argues that Confucian tradition is rich in ideas and practices promoting accountability, transparency and trust. Without fully understanding Confucian tradition, many scholars have been too hasty to associate contemporary Asian political culture with Confucianism. Furthermore, many traditional values and the institutions embodying them can teach us how to improve our governance. By asking what are truly traditional Confucian values and which among them are compatible with democracy, we can go a long way toward designing a system of Confucian governance.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Governance is currently a fashionable topic. Not only does the political establishment debate the issue, unlikely participants such as corporate boards (a la corporate governance) and development banks (e.g., the World Bank's New Development Paradigm) have also been drawn into the debate. What, however, is the meaning of governance and how do we attain it? Good governance can be measured by the ability of a political system to produce good policies. Good policies, in turn, are those that (1) are generally oriented toward desirable social goals (such as economic growth), (2) are consistent and coherent and (3) reflect broad national interests rather than excessive interest group influence. Some place more emphasis on procedural conditions than on substantive aspects of policies, namely, transparent policymaking process, accountability of government officials and broad participation by stakeholders. Defining what constitutes good governance appears straightforward, but in reality, it is difficult to form a consensus on priorities. How to actually measure the quality of governance is also controversial and technical, as shown by recent attempts to measure the production of laws by different legislatures (Mayhew 1991).

Consequently, there is no consensus on how to attain good governance, which is surprising, since the ultimate goal of political science is to identify necessary and sufficient conditions for good governance. Scholars have long searched for institutional arrangements conducive to good policy choices. Yet, although at the system level democracy supposedly produces better governance than authoritarianism, institutional arrangements also vary widely across countries with the same regime, whether democratic or authoritarian. A democratic government can, for example, choose either a presidential or parliamentary system, and this choice is an important variable affecting its performances.

Furthermore, it would be a mistake to focus only on institutions without examining the broader social environments in which they are embedded. Broad social conditions are important because they affect the choice of institutions as well as their subsequent effectiveness. For example, in order for democracy to work smoothly, the existence of certain values and attitudes, such as trust, tolerance and accommodation, is necessary.

In this paper, I explore the relevance of culture for understanding the quality of governance in contemporary Korea. Beginning with definitions and dimensions of national culture, I attempt to give a systemic description of the values and attitudes of contemporary Koreans. How contemporary political culture affects democratic performance is illustrated with an example of failed economic reforms before the 1997 economic crisis. The next section presents the main argument of the paper. Although some problems such as lack of pragmatism are of Confucian origin, others, especially, the lack of accountability, transparency or trust, cannot be attributed to Confucian tradition. Indeed, I argue that Confucian tradition is rich in ideas and practices promoting accountability, transparency and trust. Without fully understanding Confucian tradition, many scholars have been too hasty in associating contemporary Asian

political culture with Confucianism. Furthermore, many traditional values and the institutions embodying them can teach us how to improve our governance. By asking what are truly traditional Confucian values and which among them are compatible with democracy, we can go a long way toward designing a system of Confucian governance.

II. KOREAN CULTURE FROM A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

Let us define what culture is. Hofstede (1991) defines culture as mental programming, i.e., patterns of thinking, feeling and potential acting, which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another. Mental programming is needed because it helps groups solve their collective problems. According to Hofstede, problems common to all societies are (1) relation to authority, (2) conception of self, in particular, the relation between individual and society and the individual's concept of masculinity and the expression of feelings, and (3) ways of dealing with conflicts, including the control of aggression and the expression of feelings. Different societies have different solutions to these problems, which, in turn, represent dimensions of their national culture.

Consequently, there are four dimensions of national culture, power distance index (PDI), individualism, masculinity, and uncertainty avoidance index (UAI). PDI measures the degree of inequality in the society, the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is unequally distributed. Individualism, as opposed to collectivism, measures the extent to which members of a group place individual interest over group interest. Masculine cultures value success, money and material possessions, assertiveness and competition, whereas feminine cultures value caring for others, maintaining warm personal relationships, solidarity with others, and the quality of how life is lived. Lastly, uncertainty avoidance is the extent to which people in the society want to avoid uncertain situations. People in high uncertainty avoidance cultures prefer structured (i.e., strict laws and norms) over unstructured environments.

Inglehart (1997) has done another major comparative study of national cultures. According to him, people's values are shifting from modern values to post-modern values with increasing emphasis on the quality of life and self-expression. To find support for his argument, he compares people's attitudes toward five issues, (1) post-materialist values, (2) subjective well-being, (3) interpersonal trust, (4) support for revolution, and (5) support for reform.

Table 1 shows where Korea is located on the dimensions of national culture that Hofstede and Inglehart define. Compared with Western values, i.e., those of North America and Western Europe, Korean values are authoritarian, collectivist, and uncertainty avoiding; differences are not as significant on other dimensions. Recent debates on Asian values are largely consistent with these studies, since Asian values are usually defined in terms of collective interests and respect for order and hierarchy

(Lee 1994). Comparative studies of national cultures, however, do not capture one aspect of Asian culture, which is emphasis on education and learning.

TABLE 1. RATINGS OF KOREAN NATIONAL CULTURE

Dimensions of Culture/ Countries	Korea	Japan	China	North America	Western Europe	South America
PDI	60	54	58*	39.5	35.6	63.3
Individualism	18	46	17*	85.5	71	26.6
Masculinity	39	95	45*	57	42.9	49.8
UAI	85	92	69*	47	54.8	84
Post-materialism	18	25	7	23.5	25.6	19.5
Subjective Well-being	51	54	42	73	75.3	54.5
Interpersonal Trust	34	42	60	51	45.6	21.5
Supporting Revolution (%)	7	2	7	6	4	11.5
Supporting Reform (%)	83	77	68	79	77.3	74.5

Note: * Ratings are based on surveys of Taiwanese.

Sources: Hofstede (1991); Inglehart (1997).

III. CULTURE AND ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PERFORMANCE

Mainstream studies about political culture have examined the link between cultural characteristics and the development of democracy with a focus on the notion of democratic values and attitudes (Diamond 1993). It has been argued that the development and maintenance of democracy needs, or at least would be enhanced by, the presence of some cultural orientations such as moderation, cooperation, bargaining, and accommodation among political elites. "These elements of political culture are needed to cope with one of the central dilemmas of democracy: to balance cleavage and conflict with the need for consensus" (Diamond 1993). From this point of view, what is needed is cultural re-orientation, which promotes democracy and as a result, contributes to enhanced economic performance.

But it seems that there are more than one way in which political culture can affect national economic performance. To find out these other links, we must understand how political culture affects actual government policies. Economists and game theorists offer their perspectives on the role of culture. To succeed, a society must resolve ubiquitous collective action problems caused by the existence of uncertainty and transaction costs. When there is too much uncertainty, formal institutions are not comprehensive or flexible enough to solve collective action problems. To cope with a high level of uncertainty or unforeseen contingencies, a society or organization has to come up with a loose set of norms and beliefs, called culture. According to this perspective, the

role of culture is instrumental and functional; it is designed to promote efficient transactions. A related, but slightly different idea is viewing culture as focal points, natural reference points around which actors' expectations converge. When there is more than one mutually beneficial agreement and actors cannot decide which one to choose, they have to coordinate with each other. When explicit coordination is unfeasible or prohibitively expensive, it helps to have focal points, toward which actors will gravitate without explicit communication. According to this perspective, the role of culture in promoting efficient transactions is limited to guiding the actors' expectations; culture does not change the incentive structure of relationships. Seen this way, political culture contributes to the choice of better public policies by helping political actors resolve their collective action problems.

What really matter to national performance, however, may be not cultural characteristics *per se* but the degree of cultural consensus. A nation may be successful when its culture is coherent and adaptable, enabling it to define and attain its goals, and when there is the least distance between the prevailing culture and the formal rules and regulations of its institutions.¹ When a country has conflicting cultural values with one set dominating actual practices and the other shaping the formal rules and regulations, its culture is incoherent and inconsistent, it fails to perform successfully.

The study of culture has been experiencing a renaissance since the publication of *Trust* by Francis Fukuyama. Under the assumption that a sustained economy requires a particular form of industrial organization, i.e., the presence of large-scale, professionally managed, "spontaneously formed," private firms, Fukuyama argues that low-trust societies in which relationships are based on family and kinship cannot support such organizations because they cannot mobilize necessary resources. Following Fukuyama, Putnam emphasizes the role of trust, which he calls social capital, in enhancing democratic governance and economic performance. He finds the evidence in Italy where differences in social capital, as manifested in levels of civic engagement, explain the variations in economic and political performance across regions. Both Fukuyama and Putnam assume that how well a society performs depends on the success of inter-group cooperation and coordination and that the role of culture is to facilitate such collective actions.

In the case of Korea, too, culture has often been cited as a critical factor in accounting for its development path. But it is difficult to isolate the effects of culture. Although it is true that Korean national culture is clearly distinct from those of other nations, we do not know at that level of aggregation which aspects of Korean culture facilitate or impede its development. Diamond (1999), for example, argues that the public perception of democratic legitimacy is the key dimension of political culture promoting democratic stability and consolidation. For Korea, he finds that people's support for democracy has grown over time. It is also found that economic and other

¹ This hypothesis is adapted from Loche (1987) who posits the relationship between national ideology and competitiveness in terms of the distance between the prevailing ideology and the actual practices of the country's institutions.

performance variables have had little effects on public support for democracy. Diamond, however, overlooks other cultural correlates of democracy that are relevant for explaining the performance of democracy, e.g., how effective policymaking processes are. Since he is interested in understanding the stability of new democracies, he focuses on the perception of democratic legitimacy, which he believes is one of the most significant determinants of democratic stability.

However, it is not clear whether support for democracy is even the best predictor of democratic stability in new democracies. In the long run, democracy has to perform to sustain itself. If certain values and attitudes (such as tolerance, trust and accommodation) are pre-requisites for good democratic performance, it is important to ask whether those values are present in new democracies. Moreover, democratic legitimacy may be an outcome or component of democratic consolidation rather than its determinant.

Another problem with an exclusive focus on the public support for democracy is that although people support democracy in principle, their support for specific democratic acts or practices may be weak. For example, the public desires and demands strong leaders. Even weaker are people's democratic values; Korean people remain largely authoritarian, collectivist and distrustful. As a result, people hold "negative" expectations about others' behavior. I am confident that most Koreans will say no if they are asked whether other people behave democratically. If people hold such "negative" beliefs, such beliefs can be self-fulfilling expectations and people will not behave democratically, expecting that others will not reciprocate.

Although there are no systemic data, it appears that the most salient features of contemporary Korean political culture are authoritarianism and a lack of political pragmatism. First, major political actors, including the executive leadership, the bureaucracy, the ruling New Korea Party, and some top political organizations, did not completely shed their authoritarian ways. That is, they were often reluctant to build a consensus through the democratic process. President Kim Young Sam, for example, was widely criticized as a "civilian dictator." The public, for its part, was impatient with the inevitably slow process of democratic decision-making, demanding quick solutions and strong leadership. This preference for "quick and efficient" resolution of disputes, which is only possible under authoritarianism, is confirmed by various public opinion surveys. Shin (1998), for example, finds that only 9 percent of Korean voters are what he calls representative democrats (i.e., those who endorse democratic institutions and reject authoritarian solutions). Almost a half of the respondents (49 percent) support democratic institutions but refuse to reject authoritarian solutions fully. Others are strong or weak supporters of authoritarianism. Korean citizens "respect the need for democratic forms and yet need the reassurance of strong leadership for continued prosperity" (Steinberg 1995, 402). Thus, although Koreans support democracy in principle, their support for democracy in action is lukewarm at best.

Second, Korean citizens have been slow to adopt the values and attitudes necessary

for democratic dispute settlement such as pragmatism, a display of trust and tolerance, and beliefs in equality and rights.² On the basis of survey data, Han and Euh (1984) classified only 30 percent of Korean citizens as having both modern social values and democratic values and attitudes (display of trust and tolerance toward others and beliefs in equality and rights). Korean citizens are also noted for their willingness to protest, rather than looking for a negotiated settlement to a political dispute. A Confucian emphasis on morality may be another reason why political actors lack pragmatism. As noted by Kim (1988), political disputes are often framed and depicted as controversies over opposing moral principles, with each party adhering rigidly to its abstract causes and rejecting compromise for fear of "losing face." Cultural barriers to a negotiated settlement of political disputes were particularly severe when the disputes featured two strong interest groups. This is consistent with Helgesen's (1998, 257-58) observation that Koreans' willingness to trust and cooperate depends on whether they interact with an in-group or an out-group. Political disputes involving two out groups can rarely be resolved through negotiation. Horizontal coordination and cooperation in a hierarchical society is also difficult.³ When the relationship between two groups or individuals is not vertically ordered, or when the old hierarchical relationship breaks down as a result of political change, a cooperative relationship becomes harder to maintain.

Mo (2001) argues that political culture has been associated with the persistent problem of policy gridlock under democracy. The most telling example of the negative role of political culture is the economic crisis of 1997. Policy gridlock over economic reform had lasted for over 10 years before the crisis and one can say that the gridlock finally took its toll in 1997. The Korean political system had many chances but failed to carry out long over-due economic reforms.

There are many cases of policy gridlock because of the political culture and weak democratic institutions, which are most pronounced in the legislative process.⁴ First, the system of legislative bargaining is not firmly established. Despite its constitutional mandate, the National Assembly continues to be subordinate to the executive branch in the policymaking process.⁵ Neither does the bureaucracy provide a stable me-

² Many have noted and deplored the political activities of special interests under democracy (Im 1997). Attempts by interest groups to pursue their self-interest are commonly referred to as "group egoism." This paper seeks to show that policy gridlock is one of the more significant consequences of the rise of special interests and that it is not their pursuit of self-interest per se but their short-time horizon and narrow conception of self-interest that causes policy gridlock in Korea.

³ This problem is not limited to Korea. Campbell (1984, 308), for example, notes that "in the Japanese bureaucracy horizontal conflict is unusually intense and vertical conflict muted."

⁴ Since 1987, Korea has made much progress in achieving procedural democracy (Steinberg 1998). Democratization began with major procedural reforms at the national level, such as the direct election of the president and other electoral reforms. Elections have been regularly held and there has been hardly any dispute over their procedures and outcomes. There are some signs of consolidation, such as the election of Kim Dae Jung in December 1997, marking the first victory of an opposition candidate in a presidential election. As this paper explains, however, Korean democracy is still maturing.

⁵ Jaung (1998) shows that democratization has not freed the National Assembly from its subordinate role in the legislative process. A majority of bills passed in the legislature are still proposed by the executive branch.

chanism of interest intermediation. As a result, disputing parties do not have a place in which to negotiate. Although the government has employed independent commissions to build social consensus on labor and financial reforms, they have been ad hoc and temporary and, as such, cannot substitute for the legislature as arenas in which to negotiate important public policy issues. When non-elected bodies mediate policy conflicts, it can aggravate policy gridlock because there is no obvious way to decide which side has majority support and their decisions are not accepted as legitimate.

Second, when it comes time to make decisions, informal rules, such as constraints on majority rule or the consensus norm in the National Assembly, often take precedence over formal rules. Under certain conditions, the majority party is prevented from exercising its majority in the National Assembly.⁶ In at least two reform episodes, the labor reform of 1996 and the financial reform of 1997, the ruling party had to withdraw its proposals in the face of strong opposition even though it had a solid majority in the National Assembly.

Mo (2001) is an effort to demonstrate the effects of political culture on specific policy outcomes in Korea. Previous studies of political culture in Korea and elsewhere have focused on the compatibility between political culture and liberal democracy, but not on the role of culture in policymaking process (Pye 1985; Diamond 1993). In trying to isolate the role of culture, Mo (2001) presents a way to think about the policymaking processes of Korea during the period of democratization.

IV. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TRADITIONAL AND MODERN VALUES

As I have argued, there are cultural barriers to efficient dispute settlement. Unless they are eliminated, Korean democracy will continue to suffer from policy gridlock. It is straightforward to see why negotiation may not be the preferred way of collective decision-making in Confucian culture. First, a negotiation situation implies the existence of a certain degree of equality between the parties in that one party cannot simply impose her will on the other. Therefore, there would be relatively few negotiation situations in authoritarian cultures because most relationships are vertically ordered. In those societies, authority, rather than negotiation, is used to settle disputes. Second, Confucian leaders are supposed to lead by way of their virtue and if they find themselves in a negotiation situation with their followers, they would be admitting their own failings. Third, Confucians, who are supposed to seek moral perfection, would not be comfortable with negotiation situations in which they may have to be

⁶ As will be explained later, the minority party tends to gain an informal veto power when the proposed change imposes "heavy costs" on them. The conditions that trigger the informal consensus rule are similar to those under which Japanese opposition parties were able to win compromises from the Liberal Democratic Party. "Compromises have been most frequent when the parliamentary majorities of the LDP have been slimmest and when the issues have been generating the most heat in the press and among the citizenry" (Perlmutter 1992, 11).

calculating (of personal interests) and manipulating (of their intentions). Given these, it is plausible that much of the current difficulty with negotiation originates from Confucianism.

However, it is one thing to blame Confucianism for a lack of pragmatism and it is another to dismiss Confucian values as irrelevant to modern democratic governance. It would be a gross misrepresentation of Confucianism if one associates it with crony capitalism, corruption, non-transparency, and unaccountability. They are not Confucian values and nor are they inevitable consequences of Confucian values. Not only were transparency, accountability, and freedom of speech held up as political ideas by Confucians, many political leaders successfully promoted and protected them. The democratic nature of Confucianism also includes the ideas of popular sovereignty and responsiveness to public opinion or public consensus.

1. Transparency and Accountability

Accountability is one of the necessary conditions for good governance. For a long time, political theorists have thought that the key to good governance is to keep power under control. "In framing a government the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself." At the conceptual level, accountability indicates the degree to which power is kept under control, domesticated or subject to the rule of law. In terms of institutions, accountability describes a relationship between accountable and accounting parties, i.e., the degree to which accountable parties are accountable to accounting parties.

"A is accountable to B when A is obliged to inform B about A's (past and future) actions and decisions, to justify them, and to suffer punishment in the case of eventual misconducts" (Schedler 1999, 17). Accountable agents have to possess the capacity to demand public officials to inform and explain their activities and to impose sanctions on office holders who violate certain rules of conduct.

Types of accountability vary according to its standards and sources. Different standards of accountability apply to public officials (political, administrative, professional, financial, moral, legal, and constitutional). O'Donnell (1999) makes a distinction between vertical and horizontal accountability, depending on the hierarchical relationship between accounting and accountable agents. If accounting agents hold agencies of equal power or position accountable, they are said to be exercising horizontal accountability. A system of checks and balances among the three branches of government is an example of horizontal accountability. Agents of horizontal accountability also include ombudsmen, auditors, accounting offices and anti-corruption commissions within the executive branch. Conditions for effective horizontal accountability are as follows:

1. The existence of vertical accountability.
2. The existence of multiple accounting agencies. Effective horizontal accountability

is not the product of isolated agencies but of networks of agencies that include at their top courts committed to such accountability.

3. Overlapping jurisdictions of institutions of accountability. By building several strong powers that partially intrude on each other, we can enhance the autonomy of each of them with respect to what would have resulted from a simple separation of such powers.
4. The accounting party must be independent from the accountable party in all decisions that concern its field of competence.
5. Recursive and reciprocal accountability accounting agents "check and balance" or are accountable to each.

Transparency and accountability are not alien to Confucian culture. Agents of horizontal accountability, in particular, were considered as essential to the success of Confucian governance. A good example is the Censorate of the Chosun Dynasty, a Confucian embodiment of horizontal accountability. The Censorate consisted of three censoring organs, the Office of the Inspector-General (OIG), the Office of the Censor-General (OCG), and the Office of Special Counselors (OSC). The *Samsa*, as the three were known, were designed to prevent abuses in the exercise of political and administrative authority. The OSC's main functions were to search out administrative and legal precedents, write major state documents and advise the king on public affairs.

Among the three, the OIG and the OCG, which came to be known as *taegan* or Censorate, represented the two main agents of accountability within the government. Officially, the OIG was charged with "criticizing public policy, scrutinizing the conduct of the officialdom, rectifying mores, redressing public wrongs, and preventing forgery and fraudulent misuse of public credentials." The authority of the OCG, on the other hand, was to offer remonstrance to the king and to lodge complaints against office holders. The restraint on the conduct of the king himself by the OCG was perhaps the most innovative feature of Chosun's structure of horizontal accountability. On paper, there were clear differences in the authority of the OIG and the OCG. The OIG's main task was censoring (彈劾) while that of the OCG was remonstrance (諫諍), i.e., evaluating the king's conduct. But their jurisdictions overlapped in practice, and it is more accurate to say that the OIG and the OCG worked together to monitor and oversight "all aspects of royal, official, popular (principally *yangban*) conduct and mores."

What did the Censorate actually do? It appears that the censors' actual activities were much broader than the formal descriptions of their authority indicate. According to Choi (1996), the censors' activities consisted of opinion-giving (言論) (on the king's conduct, censure, policy choice, and official appointments), participation in policy-making (參政), attendance to the king (侍立), review of personnel appointments (考課書經), implementation of laws and ordinances, censoring and monitoring (糾察), prosecution (鞫問), and adjudication of legal disputes (決訟). Thus, the

censors were not only judicial and auditing agents (judges, prosecutors, and auditors) but also voices of dissent and opposition (言官), playing the roles of mass media and opposition parties in modern democracies. This aspect of the Censorate reflected a strong Confucian belief that the king should encourage open discussion and criticism within the government. At the same time, the censors also acted as policy advisors and counselors by offering opinions, recommendations and guidance on the basis of their knowledge of history and Confucian philosophy to the king and high officials.

I argue that the censoring organs were accounting agents in a modern sense because they could subject public officials to the threat of sanctions, oblige them to conduct their duties in transparent ways, and force them to explain or justify their actions. In what follows, I will summarize what is known about how the censors exercised these powers of information, justification and enforcement.

Accounting agents must have access to information. It seems that the censors of early Chosun had the following sources of information: First, they participated in the formative stage of policy-making by attending Royal Lecture sessions. Every OSC counselor was a member of the Office of Royal Lectures. The Censorate was allowed to join the morning and afternoon sessions. The Censorate also insisted on participating in other arenas of policy deliberations such as the king's meetings with high officials (朝啓, 常參) (Choi 1974, 46-49).

Second, important policy and appointment decisions were subject to formal review by the Censorate. All appointments to civil and military posts below the Fourth Rank were to be approved by the Censorate. "In accordance with a procedure known as *sogyong*, a document bearing the name, lineage, and career data of each such appointee was submitted to the Censorate for endorsement, and if the Censorate officials failed to give their approval within fifty days, the appointment would be rescinded" (Wagner 1974, 15). More importantly, Censorate reviews were required before promulgating new and amended laws. However, it is doubtful that this review amounted to a formal veto because the Censorate intervened after the king already approved the new laws that were legislated by the State Council. At this stage of legislative process, the Censorate may have simply screened the language of new laws for legal consistency and enforceability instead of deliberating their substance.

The third source of information was the reporting of acts of official misconduct to the Censorate, typically through memorials to the king, by those who suffered from or witnessed them. Other than these *ex ante* sources of information, it is not clear whether they had *ex post* capabilities to gain information through regular and irregular audits. They may have relied mainly on memorials sent to the king even though they may not have had access to them before reaching the king. Neither is clear whether the Censorate was allowed to review the records of official historians and the diaries of government agencies.

The power of justification was implicit in the way that the censors went about "prosecuting offenders." The first thing that the censors would do was to make accusations. The accused party would then be forced to defend itself to the king

against the charges made by the Censorate. This way, the censors were able to demand and receive explanations.

The next question is whether or not the Censorate was able to exercise or enforce their authority. It appears that the censors had many opportunities to present their views to the king. They could offer remonstrance during Royal Lecture sessions. They were also invited to important meetings convened by the king. The regular channel of communication to the king was direct reporting (啓言) in writing (上疏) or verbally. The Censorate could report twice a day. In times of emergency, they could do so as many times as necessary.

The main instrument of punishment that the censoring bodies possessed was censuring. Censures were recommended to the king against officials who committed misconduct and broke laws. In the recommendations, the censors not only explained the nature of infraction and misconduct but also suggested specific measures of punishment. The king, upon receiving a censure request, decided whether or not to prosecute the accused(s). Interestingly, the king rarely followed censure recommendations. Chung (1994) reports that the acceptance rate (which is defined as the proportion of censure recommendations that were fully or partially accepted by the king) was only 14.1 percent during the reign of King Songjong. More often than not, the king, especially, King Sejo, tried to suppress the censors by employing a variety of tactics including interrogation of censors over the identity of the censor who first conceived and suggested the censure (Chung 1994). Chung cautions against a simple interpretation of the low success rate of censure petitions that the Censorate was ineffective or not influential. First, it took a number of censures (over one hundred in the case of Han Myong-hui) to "nail" a target. Therefore, we have to ask how often the Censorate eventually succeeded once they set their target. Second, somewhat counter-intuitively, the low success rate may indicate that the Censorate was being faithful to their mandate. Remember that the censoring bodies were designed to "check and balance" the king, so they were expected to offer recommendations that the king did not like. The censors during the early Chosun period were not supposed to be the executors of the king's will. If the censors had simply followed the king's wishes, the acceptance rate would have been much higher.

So far, I have discussed why I think that the censoring organs in the early Chosun period were indeed institutions of horizontal accountability according to the definitions of modern democratic theory. The reason is that the Censorate fulfilled the three essential functions of accounting agencies, information, justification and enforcement. In my view, however, what is interesting about the Censorate is not that they were accounting agents, as they existed in pre-modern China and elsewhere, but that they were well or even optimally designed for effective horizontal accountability. I say this because the censoring institutions of the Chosun dynasty seem to have satisfied most, if not all, of the strict conditions for effective horizontal accountability that we impose on modern poliarchies: (1) the autonomy of accounting agencies, (2) the existence of multiple accounting agencies, (3) the presence of over-lapping jurisdictions

among the accounting agencies, (4) reciprocal accountability, and (5) the existence of vertical accountability (such as electoral discipline).

When designing a system of horizontal accountability, we have to solve two problems. First, we have to create accounting agencies that are sufficiently powerful or autonomous to do their job. The second, more difficult problem is a second-order accountability issue, namely, how to hold accounting agencies themselves accountable. Let's first take on the easier issue of the two. Since the censors' main targets were high officials and the king, we have to investigate what kind of mechanisms were in place to protect the censors from political influence. At the ideological level, the prevailing moral philosophy of Confucianism with its strong emphasis on moral rectitude and historical example provided the *raison d'être* for the censoring system. As long as Confucianism remained a state ideology, there was always going to be a certain level of support for it. To be implemented effectively, however, the idea of strong accounting agencies has to be embodied in specific institutions and practices and more importantly, has to be politically supported by a sufficient number of important stakeholders in the government.

A number of protective devices were used to ensure the autonomy of the Censorate. The two suggested by Lee (1994) are the placement of the Censorate directly under the king, outside the formal line of administration, and the ban on the censors holding a concurrent position because of possible conflicts of interests. In addition, junior officials in the Board of Personnel (吏曹評良) were entrusted with making nominations for Censorate positions, making the censors autonomous of the high-ranking officials that they were supposed to criticize. Political leaders at the time did not want the censors to become dependent on the personnel officials and gave the censors a limited veto over personal decisions. In early Chosun, the personnel officials and the censors cooperated with each other to check and balance the power of merit subjects and other high officials.

It is interesting that the government did not fix and guarantee terms of office for the censors, which would have helped enhance their independence. Records show that there was a high degree of turnover in the Censorate. But the censors typically received promotion after the end of their tenure and were not assigned to provincial positions immediately after leaving the Censorate (Choi 1974). Both of these measures were intended to prevent the use of demotions against the censors as a way of influencing their decisions. The censors were also exempted from bi-annual performance evaluations, which were required for other officials. It is not clear to what extent the censoring organs were financially independent, which would be a plausible indicator of their independence.

The next designing problem after providing autonomy to accounting agents is how to keep them under control and hold them accountable. As if following the prescriptions of modern democratic theory, the designers of the Censorate set up multiple accounting agents, made their jurisdictions overlap and allowed them to monitor one another, thus creating a system of reciprocal accountability. As explained above, the Chosun

government had three censoring organs, which were accounting agencies. Moreover, individual censors enjoyed such a degree of independence that we can say that each one of them was an accounting agency in his own right. The censors censured not only other censoring agencies but also their own colleagues and even superiors. The censors' jurisdictions also overlapped, much more than the law provided. The only formal area of overlapping between the jurisdictions of the OIG and the OCG was the power to review personnel and legislative decisions. But their jurisdictional boundaries converged in practice, especially in the areas of remonstrance and censoring. The convergence of jurisdictions, in turn, allowed the censoring organs to hold one another accountable.

The weakest link in Chosun's system of horizontal accountability was, of course, the absence of vertical accountability. That is, people had virtually no ability to keep political leaders accountable. The only outside restraints on the king came from the threat of revolt and coup.

Institutional explanations of the effectiveness of the Censorate can be criticized on two grounds. First, institutions are binding as long as there is a sufficient level of political support for them. According to this power-oriented school of thought, we have to investigate the alignment of political interests that supported the Censorate if we want to explain the early success of the Censorate. During the early Chosun period, there were two elite groups competing for power, merit subjects (and royal marriage kin) and rural Neo-Confucian literati, known as *sarim* (士林). The Censorate was *sarim*'s main platform for challenging the dominance of merit subjects. At the time the king had incentives to promote *sarim* and thus, the Censorate because he needed to counter-balance the merit subjects. Therefore, a powerful alliance between the king and *sarim* was the political foundation of the Censorate. When this alliance changed over time, so did the influence of the Censorate. When the king did not feel that the Censorate served his interests, he was willing to punish and even purge the censors as Yonsan gun and King Chungjong did on four different occasions. The Censorate's ultimate loss of effectiveness may have come when *sarim* themselves lost interest in horizontal accountability after finally winning power during the reign of King Sonjo.

The second line of criticisms would focus on the accuracy of historical facts. The Censorate, for example, may not have worked as they were supposed to. From the very beginning of the dynasty, there were constant criticisms of the censors for making accusations on the basis of rumors and conjectures (風聞上疏). Over time, the censoring bodies became increasingly intolerant and partisan. By the 18th century, the abuse and decline of the Censorate was so serious that Chung Yak Yong openly supported its abolition.

Despite these reservations, the experience with the Censorate shows that the ideas of transparency and accountability are classic Confucian values and that political leaders of the Chosun dynasty designed it with an elaborate and surprisingly "modern" construct.

2. *Trust and Mutual Aid Organizations*

Confucian scholars also recognized the importance of community organizations to effective governance. It was Chu His in the 12th century who incorporated the principle of voluntary cooperation into community structures (De Bary 1998). Based on the community compact of Lu Dajun in the 11th century, Chu formulated four principles of community building: (1) mutual encouragement in the performance of worthy deeds; (2) mutual admonition in the correction of errors and failings, (3) reciprocal engagement in rites and customs, and (4) mutual aid in times of distress and misfortune. The key aims of this compact were to establish stable self-regulating local communities through the leadership of an educated moral elite that encouraged self-discipline, mutual respect and assistance, voluntary efforts, and joint ritual to provide for the needs of the community as a whole.

During the Chungchong reign (1506-44) of the Chosun dynasty, the government introduced the community compact system, called *hyangyak*, from Sung China. Local *yangban* elites either directly adopted the Chu code or one of the Korean versions in organizing their own communities into a self-governing corporate structure. The central government recognized their leadership in the maintenance of community order and in the moral education of peasants in accordance with the Confucian code.

The *hyangyak* movement gradually spread throughout the country and by the end of the eighteenth century, the idea of self government under the leadership of local elites became firmly established. Even in those hamlets with a resident *yangban* family, peasants organized themselves into a corporate unit by adopting one of the local codes.

3. *A Government for the People*

Popular sovereignty is another idea that Confucians developed and practiced. According to Meng-tzu, the king is the son of heaven, and heaven bestowed on its son a mandate to provide good government, that is, to provide good for the people. If he did not govern righteously, the people had the right to rise up and overthrow his government in the name of heaven. Meng-tzu even justified regicide, saying that once a king loses the mandate of heaven he is no longer worthy of his subjects' loyalty. The ancient Chinese philosophy of "people-based politics" (民本政治) teaches that the will of people is the will of heaven. Therefore, one can say that Confucians believed in a government for the people, if not by or of the people.

4. *Public Consensus and Policymaking*

An unexplored territory in the study of governance is the role of policy advice in improving the quality of governance. Ideas are a concept that best captures the effect of policy advice on policy outcomes. Ideas, along with interests and institutions, are the main determinants of policy choice. Ideas affect policy outcomes in at least three

ways. First, policymakers look to act with meaning and purpose, and ideas define what is right and meaningful. Second, the choice of a policy measure is based on some understanding of cause and effect, and ideas explain the causal relationships among the phenomena affected by policy choice. Lastly, ideas act as focal points. Once ideas are accepted, they influence outcomes primarily as points of reference or anchors around which actors' expectations converge. This explains why certain ideas remain influential even after their original normative and positive appeal has weakened considerably.

Discourse on policy advice has a long tradition in East Asia. In fact, Confucian philosophy was founded on the idea of good governance based on good advice. The role of the scholar-bureaucrat was essentially to give policy advice, i.e., to advise and remonstrate against the king to follow the ideal practices of the "old kingdoms" and teachings from classical Confucian texts. Alternative sources of policy advice are also familiar to Confucian tradition. During the Chosun period (1392 - 1905) of Korea, government officials were not the only source of policy advice; Confucian scholars out of office, who were either preparing to enter the bureaucracy or educating students in local schools, played a leading role in shaping public opinion on major policy issues. Policymakers of the Chosun dynasty firmly believed in the *politics of Sarim* (士林), according to which public policy was guided by public opinion in the form of official consensus.

V. MERGING OF NEW AND OLD

In many ways, participants in the Asian values debate have talked past each other. Proponents of Asian values like Lew Kwan Yew are guilty of denying the democratic traditions of Asia, while their critics like Kim Dae Jung make a mistake of denying the existence of undemocratic values and attitudes in contemporary and traditional Asian cultures. The debate now has to move forward in two directions.

First, we have to accept the destiny of democracy and ask which contemporary Asian values and attitudes obstruct the performance of Asian democracies. Asians have to improve their democracies, regardless of whether they have democratic traditions or not. In the case of Korea, I argue, it is the prevailing (anti) negotiation culture that has proved most damaging to the performance of Korean democracy.

Second, Asians should look for their own model of democracy. Before importing Western institutions, they should be subject to a compatibility test, i.e., whether they are compatible with local political culture. It should be noted that Western liberal democracy is not the only model of democracy and there are a wide variety of democratic systems. For models of Asian governance, one does not have to invent everything anew. As I showed, there have been many political institutions in Asia that are democratic as well as grounded on traditional Asian values.

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