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The Importance of Confucian values to Kim Jong Il's System

A comparison with Kim Il Sung's System

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Introduction

In this article, I proposed an approach that assumes the presence of Confucianism (유교) and Neo-Confucianism (성리학) in the North Korean ideology especially during the Kim Jong Il's (김정일) era¹. I would like to prove that North Korea can be at least partially seen as the modern revival of the Choson Confucianism in terms of ideological phenomenon². North Korean elites, especially Kim Il Sung (김일성) and Kim Jong Il reinvented and manipulated various forms of Confucianism because they wanted to legitimate their domination.

To understand the North Korean society, its history and its way of functioning, it is rather essential to look at it from the North Korean historical point of view, searching consequently for what dictates people's lives. It has to be note that North Korean politicians operate under conditions of a specific rationality, created by their Chuche ideology³ (주체사상). Given the intense and complete immersion in this ideology, North Korean elites do not consider all possible alternatives that might be available to decision-makers in other countries. Although North Korea's political doctrines may appear at least strange to Westerners, as far as it represents a contemporary expression of thought that are deeply embedded in Korean history (i.e. events related to the Japanese occupation, consequences of the Korean War, unfinished conflict with

¹ Due to a lack of credible information, it's an incredibly huge task and therefore a great challenge to determine when started the Kim Jong Il's era. I made the hypothesis that Kim Jong Il started to rule (at least partially with Kim Il Sung) in 1970 when he was nominated to the position of deputy director of the Propaganda and Agitation

² The North Korean society is often described as being Confucian or Neo-Confucian. It seems that this system has borrows a lot from the ideology known as "Legalism" which was adopted by the Wei State of the first Chinese emperor. In the 14th century, Confucian scholars were buried and all books of philosophy other than legalist tracts were burnt. This doctrine implemented during the China's Ming dynasty (1364-1644) is a re-interpretation of Confucian teachings.

³ The Chuche Idea is a political thesis of Kim Il-sung which says that the Korean masses are the masters of the country's development. According to ideologists, the Chuche is based on the idea that "man is the master and decides everything."At the beginning (the term of Chuche was used for the first time by Kim Il Sung in December 1955), the Chuche Idea was formulated as principles that the government uses to justify its policy decisions. As key assumptions of this ideology, we can quote the strong military posture and self reliance on economic issues. Further information [in] Michael Breen, *Kim Jong Il: North Korea's dear leader who he is, what he wants, what to do about him*, John Wiley&Sons (Asia) Pte Ltd, Singapur 2004, p. 67-70.

South Korea). The Chuche ideology that was developed by Kim Il Sung was also basically coming from the traditional Korean political thought. Kim himself has acknowledged that he drew the term and idea of Chuche from Korean scholars taking inspiration from Confucian ideas⁴.

Therefore Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism constitute a strong basis for the North Korean Political Scheme. I will try to demonstrate that the Kim Jong Il's regime not only exhibited some several Confucian aspects but also emphasized them in comparison with the Kim Il Sung regime.

1. An overview of the Confucianism and Neo-Confucianism in the Historic Korea

Confucianism⁵ was introduced to Koguryo (고구려) in the fourth century by China. Quickly a national academy for Confucian studies, known as Taehak (태학) emerged in 372. This academy was followed by local schools called Kyongdang. Koguryo refused however to be totally sinized and therefore the impact of Confucianism was highly limited. Confucianism entered Shilla much later than in Paekche (백제) and Koguryo. The establishment of a government office in charge of Confucianism studies and the National Academy (Kukhak) in 628 marked the beginning of Confucian Studies. We should mention that it produced a quite important number of Confucian scholars. Approximately one hundred years later, in 717, portraits of Confucius and many of his disciples were brought from China and installed at the National Academy where Confucian and Chinese history were taught. We may also remark that it is not

⁴ Interview with a defector realized in October 2010. For security reasons, the identity of the defector is not revealed.

⁵ Confucianism is a Chinese ethical and philosophical system developed from the teachings of the Chinese philosopher Confucius. The core of Confucianism is humanism, the belief that human beings are teachable. Confucianism focuses on the cultivation of virtue and maintenance of ethics. More information are available in the following book: *Confucianism for the modern world*, red. Daniel A. Bell & Hahm Chaibong, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2003.

known if Paekche established really a Confucian school. Nevertheless it has to be note the Chinese-style *Sŏgi* (書記/서기/ “Documentary Records”) of Paekche was produced in the fourth century⁶.

The Neo-Confucianism is a branch of Confucianism which is quite different. This new philosophy was more intolerant in comparison to Confucianism. Each Neo-Confucian has to observe five ethical principles in human relations. Neo-Confucianism also emphasized the kingly authority and the absolute loyalty of the subjects to the ruler. We should add that the rise of Neo-Confucianism led to the sudden decline of Buddhism in Korea. At the beginning of the fifteenth century, the King Taejong (태종대왕) inaugurated a clearly anti-Buddhist policy by reducing the number of monasteries and temples. One of his followers, the tolerant King Saejong (세종대왕) tolerated Buddhism i.e. ordering the construction of the Buddhist Wongak temple in Seoul. In the sixteenth century, Buddhism became the religion of uneducated and rural population.

Neo-Confucianism was the dominant value system of the Choson (조선) Dynasty (1392-1910). It combines the social ethics of the classical Chinese philosophers Confucius (공자, 551-479 B.C.) and Mencius (맹자, 372-289 B.C.). One of key Neo-Confucianism's ideas was that the institutions and practices of an ordered human community express the principles that govern the cosmos. Therefore Neo-Confucianism defines social relations not in terms of satisfaction of the individuals involved, but in terms of the harmonious integration of individuals into a collective whole which present the harmony of the natural order. The doctrine emphasized hierarchy in human relations. The Five Relationships formulated by classical Chinese thinkers such as Mencius and by Zhu Xi (주희, 1130-1200) and other Neo-Confucian metaphysicians, governed proper human relations: that "between father and son there should be affection; between ruler and minister there should be righteousness; between husband and wife there should be attention to their separate functions; between old and young there should be proper order; and

⁶ Remco E. Breuker, *Writing History in Koryŏ*, “Korean Histories”, 2.1, 2010, p. 59.

between friends there should be faithfulness." Only the last was a relationship between equals; the others were based on authority and subordination⁷.

During the Choson Dynasty, Korean kings made the Neo-Confucian doctrine of the Chinese philosopher Zhu Xi their state ideology⁸. Although it was a foreign philosophy, Korean Neo-Confucian scholars played a role in adapting Zhu Xi's teachings to Korean conditions. This had to be realized without denying the cultural superiority of China as the homeland of civilization⁹. The notion of state ideology is also frequently used in the North Korean propaganda:

The dear respected Kim Jong Un in his work titled "Let Us Hold Great Comrade Kim Jong Il in High Esteem as General Secretary of Our Party Forever and Successfully Accomplish the Revolutionary Cause of Chuche" proclaimed it as the supreme program of the Workers' Party of Korea--modeling the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism. In the work he also clarified the invincibility of the Chuche-oriented Korean revolution that advances under the banner of this program. ...Let us model the whole society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism -- it is a revolutionary banner the Korean people should uphold now and the essential demand of the development of Korean revolution¹⁰.

The North Korean ideology is based upon the Songun-based politics implemented by Kim Jong Il. The Songun-based politics is a policy whose invincibility has been verified through severe historical ordeals. It is an invariable conviction and will of our Party to

⁷ Mathesius Konrad, *Peering Behind the Curtain on the Question of Political Religion in the DPRK*, Australian National University 2010, p 8.

⁸ This ideology was introduced by An Yu, a Korean who studied in China and who returned to Korea in the beginning of the fourteenth century. More details can be checked in the following excellent book: Chang, Carsun. *The Development of Neo-Confucian Thought*. 2 Vols. New York: Bookman Associates, 1957-1962.

⁹ Looking at the history, we can remark that traditional ties between Korea and China are deeply rooted in the Korean history. That's why the tradition of relatively fraternal ties between China and North Korea are so strong.

¹⁰ Rodong Sinmun, May. 25, Chuche 101 (2012) Friday, Editorial: *Let Us Model Whole Society on Kimilsungism-Kimjongilism*

*defend and carry forward by force of arms the sacred revolutionary cause which was pioneered and has won one victory after another by force of arms*¹¹.

2. Confucianism during the Kim Il Sung's era¹²

2.1. *The battle of Kim Il Sung against feudalism*

At the beginning of the existence of North Korea, the regime's first reforms promulgated by Kim Il Sung was processed through land reform which aims at destroying the colonial institutions. North Korean communist institutions confiscated land and properties possessed by the Japanese eradicating the economic base of the traditional kinship community. The first stage of this socialist reform used many ideological slogans calling for the abolition of established feudalistic institutions but did not directly challenge the basic ideological roots of Confucianism in Korea. North Korea also never tried to break up the family unit even though it did attempt to weaken the value of family and abolish cultural resistance to socialist idealism. The state's coercive reform was successful in abolishing feudalistic culture. It is also evident that it weakened overall traditional culture and institutions. Therefore residuals of Confucianism and traditional family culture persisted. Between 1948 and the early 1960's, the traditional Confucian expression "show filial piety to parents" was not used officially in the state's suppressive mobilization¹³.

The North Korean Constitution of 1972 itself identifies the family as a cell in the body of the society and the state as an organism looking after its cells¹⁴. The primary goal of using the socialist family cell ideology was to integrate the family into the state. The North Korean constitution eliminated all traces of

¹¹ Kim Jong Il, *The Songun-Based Revolutionary Line is a great revolutionary Line of our era and an ever-victorious banner of our resolution*, Talk to the Senior Officials of the Central Committee of the Worker's Party of Korea, January 29, Chuche 92 (2003), Pyongyang 2007.

¹² Kimilsungism can be defined as the ideology and system of power instituted by Kim Il Sung. In 1948, when the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was established, Kim Il Sung became the first premier of the North Korean communist regime. Until his death in 1994, Kim ruled strongly the country sharing the power with Kim Jong Il in the late 1960's. Kimjongilism is also often used. This term is related to the ideology of Kim Jong Il which is based on Kimilsungism. *Kim Jong Un: DPRK to carry forward revolution*, "China.org.cn", 12th June 2012

¹³ Those who are married and families receive protection from the State. It is strongly affirmed that families are the cells of the society and shall be well taken care of by the State.

¹⁴ *Socialist Constitution of The Democratic People's Republic of Korea*, 27th December 1972, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Pyongyang 1972, article 63.

feudalism and focused on the party and Suryŏng (the leader) while being in revolutionary service to the socialist state¹⁵.

2.2. *Ideological transformation*

Despite the initiatives of the domestic policy mentioned before, the ancestral Confucian cultural system centered on patriarchy was maintained in North Korea. Fundamental Confucian system (the subordination of women and the notion of filial piety in patriarchy) thus conflicting with the ideal logic of state reform. Seeing these discordances in values between the state and society, North Korean ideologists used the in the North Korean ideology.

Confucianism had been both the religion and ideology of the state for centuries. Choson Dynasty Confucianism was not only a philosophical and ethical system but also a cult of the family. Everyone was expected to show filial piety towards their parents, ancestors and the king. Participation in family sacrifices helped link the individual to the monarch, who was considered the 'father' of the national community. Traditional Korea, in other words, was a 'Family-State' that equated loyalty to the king (patriotism) with filial piety. Thus Confucian culture logically had to become a topic of propaganda in the 1970's¹⁶. Kim Jong Il made therefore the cult of Kim Il Sung the most extreme in the world (as an acceptance of the notion of filial piety). In the early 1970's, he created and organized the "4.15 Creation Group" named after Kim Il Sung's April 15 birthday which created classics believed to be written directly by Kim Il Sung¹⁷. For Kim Il Sung's seventieth birthday, Kim Jong Il managed the construction of the Kim Il Sung stadium¹⁸. Kim Jong Il wanted in this way to demonstrated that his filial piety was greater than the one of the population.

¹⁵ This domestic revolution policy was officially disclosed in a 1961 speech by Kim Il Sung entitled "*The Duty of Mothers in the Education of Children*": *Speech at the National Meeting of Mothers*, 16th November 1961." [in] Kim Il Sung Works, Vol. 15. Korean Workers Party Press, 1963 Pyongyang.

¹⁶ In his speech "On Questions about Dealing with Our National Cultural Heritage," Kim Il Sung said: *We must not, in disregard of this fact, reject the artistic works of the past blindly, simply because they are tinged with Buddhism or with feudal-Confucian ideas. ..We must develop their progressive and people-oriented aspects critically.*

¹⁷ *North Korea: a dead president's society*, "The Independent", 8th July 2004.

¹⁸ *North Korea: a dead president's society*, "The Independent", 8th July 2004.

In Kim Il Sung's speech the essential aspects of feudalistic Confucian ideology that have remained within the popular culture is the logic of traditional Confucian culture centered on patriarchal authority. The dominating discourse came to involve the state's increased effort through the process of social reform to absorb the traditional system and culture as influenced by Confucianism. Confucian culture became a propaganda tool to increase the regime's stability beginning in the late 1960's. This traditional Confucian culture tended to strengthen the function of family as a cell. That's why Kim Il Sung, considered as the head of the "Korean family" was frequently described as a person with Confucian virtues¹⁹. For examples, the Party openly describes Kim Il Sung as a god – the "Sun of Love" – "superior to Christ in love, superior to Buddha in benevolence, superior to Confucius in virtue and superior to Mohamed in justice."²⁰ Furthermore, the Confucian view compares the political system to the human body, where the country leader is like the brain and the people the body that must carry out the leader's decisions and commands. A similar analogy applicable in Confucianism is that of a wise, all knowing father who takes care of the loyal nation. Koreans being used to these concepts, Kim Il Sung was therefore able to use them in propaganda to encourage a kind of collective political loyalty to support its regime.

If we view North Korea as an extension of the Choson Kingdom, the dynastic succession is a rule. Even after the demise of the 500-year Choson Kingdom in 1910, North Korea still adheres to a dynastic system. Kim Il Sung had once floated the idea of converting the North into a monarchy. Following the deaths of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, Kim Jong Un (김정은) became the ruler of North Korea. It has to be said, that in the Choson dynasty, a teenager could become the king even when his father died prematurely. Thus blood is the prime criteria for a royal family and for the continuation of the North Korean Regime.

Eventually, Confucianism placed a heavy trust emphasis on earning the trust of the people as part of governance and politics, the new dynasty strove to heighten political transparency and accountability by maintaining thorough records. Each government bureau kept a daily record of their work called Deunnok

¹⁹ Debra A. Miller, *North Korea*, Greenhaven Press, Drake Road 2004, p. 31.

²⁰ Jasper Becker, *Rogue regime: Kim Jong Il and the looming threat of North Korea*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, p. 77.

(Daily Administrative Records of Bureau). In this regards, the Chunchugwan (Office of Annals Compilation) was the body responsible for collecting these daily records and publishing them at regular intervals as Sijeonggi (Current Administrative Records). Choson also began from the beginning of the dynasty onwards to publish detailed pictorial records of significant state events and ceremonies such as royal marriages, royal funerals, royal sacrificial rites, royal banquets, king's procession and the construction and repair of palaces. These records included intricate details pertaining to such aspects of ceremonies as the procedures, participants and expenses involved. In North Korea The notion of records and controls emerged already in the 1950's when Kim Il Sung was nominated as the head of North Korea and during the political purges which took place in these times in North Korea.

3. Confucianism during the Kim Jong Il's era

From the late 1960's, at the time when Kim Jong Il emerged at the head of the Organization and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the Korean Workers Party²¹, the state-dominated discourse about Confucian culture entered into active political discourse. For the first time “Ŏbŏi” (아버지/Father or even Parents) discourse emerged and was linked to full-scale ideological legitimization of the stable socialist family-state. It eventually led to the formation of the previously mentioned “father” discourse²². It has to be said that Kim Jong Il was at the head of these campaigns. Kim Jong Il, who will after inherit Kim Il Sung's supreme political power, tried to theoretically justify his own absolute power and advocate a new Confucian form of socialism. This can be illustrated by his thesis “Theory of the Socio-Political Organism” published in 1987. In the process of the Kim Il Sung-Kim Jong Il father-to-son transfer of power, the North Korean regime consequently restored the traditional logic of “loyalty and filial piety” in political discourse. The transformation of North Korean society's Confucian

²¹ Choe Sang Hunn, *Korea Reports Death of Official Guiding Succession*, “New York Times”, 5th June 2010.

²² There are changes in the titles used to refer to Kim Il Sung. As for the titles of Kim Il Sung, he was called “General” after liberation, and “Leader” or “Premier.” However, this began to change after the mid 1960s: Our father Kim Il Sung the Ruler. Jin Woong Kang, *The 'Domestic Revolution' – Policy and Traditional Confucianism in North Korean State Formation*, Harvard Asia Quarterly, 1st February 2008,.

culture revealed in the process of ideological justification a type of Confucian family-state that went to extremes in the union of loyalty and filial piety. The aim of Kim Jong Il was the justification was accomplished when the filial piety at home extending to the filial piety in the one social family was in accordance with loyalty to the state. Starting in the 1970's (when Kim Jong Il started to work in the Organization and Leadership Department of the Central Committee of the Korean Worker's Party, i.e. the most powerful organization in North Korea), children were taught to respect not only their parents, but also the parents of Kim Jong Il and Kim Il Sung. According to defectors, the Confucian principle of filial piety had been even reinforced concerning the son's duty to his parents during the Kim Jong Il's regime. In the 1980's, young people were more often taught to consider what their parents had done for the country during their lifetimes.

On economic issues, the presence of Confucian values is also strong: During the Kim Jong Il's era, especially in the 1980's and 1990's, North Korea has definitely used some of the anti-mercantile elements of the Confucian tradition: the authoritarianism has been strengthened. Confucian values are also transposed on the organizations of North Korean Companies. The North Korean state is controlling most industries and had the monopoly over the distribution of commodities like salt²³. Analyzing some North Korean companies, we can remark that values like hierarchy and familistic groupism are included in the management of North Korean companies (The biggest companies in North Korea are belonging to members of one family for instance the Mansudae Overseas Project Group of Companies is directly connected to the Kim Jong Un's family²⁴). It means that the Confucian ethic is incorporated into business activities.

Concerning the question of equality between men and women, the notion of the subordination of women²⁵ has been also strengthened during the Kim Jong Il's reign. It is due to the fact that the former wife of Kim Il Sung, who was an enemy to Kim Jong Il, Kim Sung Ae (김성애) was always defending

²³ Jasper Becker, *Rogue regime: Kim Jong Il and the looming threat of North Korea*, Oxford University Press, Oxford 2005, p. 75.

²⁴ Interview with a defector realized in October 2010. For security reasons, the identity of the defector is not revealed.

²⁵ According to the Confucian model of society, women had to occupy a position lower than men. Most Confucians accepted also this issue as being natural

the rights of women (she was the chair of the Korean Democratic Women's Union). Thus this organization has been even more powerful than some Party Organizations²⁶. However Kim Sung Ae was never really accepted by Kim Jong Il. Kim Jong Il kicked out her from the North Korean political scene. Afterwards, women started to be more subordinated than in the past.

The structural frame of the North Korean system was set in place in accordance with the dynastic systems of the Ancient Korea. Respect for elders was emphasized. Like the Choson Kingdom, North Korea has been brutal and uncompromising to any rebellious figures challenging the Kim dynasty. Even the dictatorial and brutal leader Kim Jong Il showed his respect for the elders. In comparison to Kim Il Sung, he reinforced the cult of the members of his family and was strictly cooperating with the old generation of North Korean politicians. These people, such as Kim Yong Nam (김영남-North Korean Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly, born in 1928), Kim Ki Nam (김기남 - vice-chairman of the Committee for Peaceful Reunification of the Fatherland, born in 1926), O Kuk Ryol (오극렬-a general of the North Korean Army, born in 1931) and others are still at the head of North Korea in spite of their ages.

When Kim Jong Il emerged at the head of North Korea (unofficially in the 1970's, officially in the 1980's), he tried to reinforce the Korean nationalism. Not only politicians promoted the Korean culture but also various artists²⁷. The situation was similar by the late Choson period when a national enlightenment movement, which combined nationalist ideologies and faiths, had already formed outside the scope of Confucianism. This movement appeared as a diverse intellectual movement promoting awareness of Korean culture's unique identity. Key spokesmen promoted an enlightened, nationalistic perspective within historical studies, and Korean language studies. The tradition of strong nationalism among the Korean people coexisted with another tradition called sadaechui²⁸. Kim Jong Il (and to a less

²⁶ Interview with a high ranking party defector realized in June 2009. For security reasons, the identity of the defector is not revealed. Another defector also stressed that according to Kim Jong Il's edicts the competences of Women Political Organizations were minimized already in the late 1970's.

²⁷ Interview with a defector realized in October 2010. For security reasons, the identity of the defector is not revealed.

²⁸ Sadae (사대), lit. "serving-the-Great".

extent Kim Il Sung) real antipathy towards foreign influence serves to intensify the nationalism of the North Korean people, who were told that world civilization originated from the Korean peninsula²⁹.

Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il took their inspiration also from the Buddhism. Thus it has to be quoted that according to the Buddhist ideology, the king was the highest ruler in the society. The people considered the king as the living Buddha of Buddhism. He's the spiritual and material leader who redeemed the world and the being who connect the past, the present and the future. The will of the king was decisive and this was justified by Buddhism. Such characteristics of Buddhism in relation to the king's ruling authority are appearing in the establishment of the Kim Il Sung's system and especially during the Kim Jong Il's era. The king (Kim Jong Il) claimed to have been chosen as the ruler according to the myth (Kim Il Sung).

We must also fully understand that the leader plays the decisive role in the revolution and construction³⁰.

Concluding Remarks

North Korea's socialist reform, which continued from liberation through the post-war revolution, was centered on a policy of domestic revolution. The key-contradiction originated in the discord between traditional culture and forced reform. Eventually, the patriarchal system was accepted during the Kim Jong Il's era, adopted by the state and even elevated to use as an ideological tool to justify its Confucian form of socialism.

I would like to present some additional remarks: there is a big danger in considering Korea as a homogeneously Confucian society, even during the Choson Dynasty. On the one hand, Koreans are self-controlled and meticulous in their fulfillment of their obligations. On the second hand, Koreans have

²⁹ Don Oberdorfer, *The Two Koreas*, Addison-Wesley, Reading 1997, p. 401.

³⁰ Kim Jong Il, *Of some problem of education In the Chuche Idea*, Foreign Languages Publishing House, Pyongyang 1987, p. 23.

reputation for emotionalism³¹. Nevertheless, while the North Korean government is always more opposed to any kind of official religion, this country is more Confucian than South Korea. Finally, as Bryan Myers mentioned, Confucianism is all about tempering instincts with intellectual discipline, with book learning. Then North Korea is much closer to Imperial Japan and fascist states that we saw in Europe in the 1930's in that it glorifies pure racial instincts³². It would mean that North Korea is more a fascist than a Confucian country.

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³¹ On the same way, the shamanism, one of Korea's most characteristic cultural expressions, contrast with the self-control idealized by Confucians.

³² Robert Siegel talks to B.R. Myers, author of the book *The Cleanest Race: How the North Koreans See Themselves and Why It Matters, who takes an unorthodox look at the North Korean regime and its people. They discuss the expressions of grief displayed by North Koreans for their leader.* "npr.org". 29th December 2011.

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Abstract in English

In this article, I proposed an approach that assumes a presence of Confucianism in the North Korean ideology especially within the Kim Jong Il's era. Confucianism constitutes a strong basis for the North Korean Political Scheme. the Kim Jong Il (김정일)'s regime not only exhibited some several Confucian aspects but also emphasized them in comparison with the Kim Il Sung (김일성) regime.

The authoritarian model of Confucianism has been functioning in the Kim Jong Il's model. It has been transformed in a way on the Chuche (주체) ideology. The Kim Jong Il's regime used Confucian values to consolidate its power. The filial aspect of the Confucianism was mainly emphasized during the Kim Jong Il era. Starting in the 1970's (when Kim Jong Il started to work in the Organization and Leadership Department of the Central Committee of the Korean Worker's Party, i.e. the most powerful organization in North Korea), children were taught to respect not only their parents, but also the parents of Kim Jong Il and Kim Il Sung.

According to defectors, the Confucian principle of filial piety had been even reinforced concerning the son's duty to his parents during the Kim Jong Il's regime. In the 1980's, young people were more often taught to consider what their parents had done for the country during their lifetimes. This traditional Confucian culture tended to strengthen the function of family as a cell. The transmission of the power to Kim Jong Eun (김정은) is still stable. It is due to the following Confucian values: a strong headship of the family (Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il) centered on the deceased Kim Il Sung. On economic issues, the presence of Confucian values is also strong: During the Kim Jong Il's era, especially in the 1980's and 1990's, North Korea has definitely used some of the anti-mercantile elements of the Confucian tradition: the authoritarianism has been strengthened. Confucian values are also transposed on the organizations of North Korean Companies. Analyzing some North Korean companies, we may note that hierarchy and familistic groupism are included in the management of North Korean companies (The biggest companies in North Korea are belonging to members of one family etc.,...). The notion of the subordination of women (According to the Confucian model of society, women had to occupy a position lower than men.

Most Confucians accepted also this issue as being natural) has been also strengthened during the Kim Jong Il's reign. It is due to the fact that the former wife of Kim Il Sung, Kim Sung Ae (김성애) was always defending the rights of women (she was the chair of the Korean Democratic Women's Union). This organization has been even more powerful than some Party Organizations. However Kim Sung Ae was never really accepted by Kim Jong Il. Kim Jong Il kicked out her from the North Korean political scene. Afterwards, women started to be more subordinated than in the past. Nevertheless, while the North Korean government is always more opposed to any kind of official religion/Confucianism, this country is more Confucian than South Korea.

Abstract in Korean

북한 김정일 정권의 통치구조에서 유교의 중요성

김일성 정권과의 비교

나는 이 글에서 북한, 특히 김정일 시대의 이데올로기에서 유교의 존재에 관해 접근해보려 한다. 유교는 북한의 정치 제도에 있어 매우 굳건한 기반이 되고 있다. 특히 김정일 정권은 유교의 몇 가지 측면을 제시했을 뿐 아니라 아버지인 김일성 정권과 비교하며 유교적 사상과 가치를 강조했다.

유교의 권위주의적 모델은 김정일의 혁명 모델에서 그 기능을 발휘했다. 또 이는 북한의 주체사상으로 변했고, 김정일 정권은 유교 사상을 자신의 권력을 강화하는 데 사용했다. 특히 유교에서 부모에 대한 자식의 효에 관한 내용은 김정일 시대에 주로 강조되었는데, 김정일 위원장이 노동당의 권력을 잡기 시작한 1970년대부터 북한의 어린이들은 자신의 부모뿐만 아니라 김일성, 김정일 부자를 존중해야 한다는 교육을 받았다.

탈북자들의 증언에 따르면 김정일 정권에서는 유교의 효에 관한 내용 가운데 부모에 대한 자식의 의무가 강조되었다. 1980년대의 젊은이들은 그들의 부모가 평생동안 나라를 위해 무엇을 하였는지를 생각하도록 교육을 받았고 이 전통적인 유교 문화는 가족의 기능이 하나의 세포처럼 강화될 수 있도록 하였다.

김정은의 아들인 김정은으로의 권력 승계는 여전히 안정적이다. 이는 김일성 시대부터 김 부자를 대표하는 가족의 강력한 권위를 강조한 유교사상 때문이다. 경제 문제에서도 유교의 영향력은 강하다. 김정일 시대, 특히 1980~90년 대에는 전통적인 유교사상에서 상업을 반대하는 내용을 강조했고, 권위주의를 강화했다. 또 북한은 유교사상을 이용해 기업의 조직을 바꾸어 놓았다. 일부

북한 기업을 분석해보면 이는 매우 계급적이면서도 일부 가족집단주의적인 성격을 띄는데 북한의 가장 큰 기업도 김일성, 김정일 부자에게 속해있다.

이밖에도 유교의 사회 모델에서 여성이 항상 남성보다 낮은 위치에 있었던 것처럼 북한의 여성이 남성에게 종속된 것도 김정일 시대에 더 심화되었다. 이것은 김일성 국가주석의 아내인 김성애(김정일의 어머니)가 항상 여성의 권리를 방어했기 때문인데, 김성애는 조선민주여성연맹의 대표였다.

이 단체(조선민주여성연맹)는 다른 일부 당 조직보다 더 강한 권력을 가졌지만 김성애는 김정일에게 인정을 받지 못했다. 그녀는 김정일의 친엄마가 아니었기 때문이다. 김정일은 그녀를 정치 무대에서 쫓아냈다. 그리고 북한의 여성은 과거보다 더 남성에게 종속되게 되었다.

내가 만난 여성 탈북자에 따르면 북한의 여성은 90년대 들어 과거보다 더 인정을 받지 못하게 되었다. 또 다른 탈북자는 김정일의 칙령에 따라 여성의 정치단체의 권한은 최소화되었다고 말했다. 이런 측면을 볼 때 북한정권이 항상 공식적인 종교와 유교사상을 더 반대한다고 말하지만 결국 한국보다 더 유교적인 것을 알 수 있다.