

Royal Lecture on Confucian Classics 經筵 in Joseon Korea:
Live commentaries of Korean Neo-Confucianism

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Royal Lecture on Confucian Classics 經筵 (hereafter Royal Lecture) is a Confucian practice for a sage ruler. Although it can be traced back to the Han dynasty, it was not always performed well and gradually faded out from Chinese history. On the other hand, the Royal lectures in Joseon Korea were intensively and persistently developed from the beginning to the end of the dynasty. Where there was a serious and heated discussion between the king and Korean neo-Confucian intellectuals, who were his masters and at the same time his subjects, we can see that they were engaging in the new commentarial tradition. They did not passively accept the traditional Confucian classics and the transmitted commentaries but rather tried to interpret the passages at issue in a new perspective that relates to the actual problems of Joseon society at the time. In this paper, I will look for the new opinions presented in Royal Lectures of Joseon dynasty that deviate from traditional commentaries and examine how they have reached this understanding. By doing so, I aim to explore the feature of Korean commentarial tradition.

Keywords: Royal Lecture on Confucian Classics 經筵, Joseon Korea, Neo-Confucianism, Commentarial traditions