

Korean Neo-Confucianists and Islamic Reformers: A Historical Comparison

조선 신유학자와 이슬람 개혁가: 비교사적 고찰

Michael J. Seth _James Madison Univ.

마이클 J. 세스 _제임스 메디슨 대학교

Abstract

Zealous scholar-officials helped establish the Choson dynasty and then undertook a project to remold government, social institutions and personal conduct conform to Neo-Confucianist norms. The role of these Korean Neo-Confucianist scholars resembled that of the *'ulamā* in Sunni Islamic societies. Both the Neo-Confucianists literati and the *'ulamā* exerted enormous moral and political influence on government and society. In particular, the efforts of the Wahhabis in eighteenth century Arabia and the Fulani jihadists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century West Africa offer many parallels to the Neo-Confucianists of early Choson. In each case they helped bring about a new dynastic order and then used their authority within the state as well as out of it to attempt to create a virtuous/pious society in accordance to their beliefs.

□ Key Words: Neo-Confucianists, Islamic reformers, Choson state, literati, *'ulamā*

초록

조선의 열정적인 유가관료는 조선왕조의 창업에 조력한 다음, 신유학적 규범에 입각해서 정부, 사회조직, 행동양식을 근본적으로 혁신하는 프로젝트에 착수했다. 그런데 조선의 유가관료가 수행한 역할은 수니파 이슬람사회에서 '울라마'가 수행한 역할과 많이 닮았다. 유가관료와 울라마는 모두 정부 및 사회에 거대한 도덕적, 정치적 영향력을 행사했기 때문이다. 특히 18세기 아라비아의 와하브파와 18세기 말에서 19세기 초까지 서아프리카에서 활동한 플라니족 지하디스트는 조선 초기에 활동한 유가관료와 대단히 유사한 역할을 수행했다. 그들은 모두 새로운 왕조질서를 형성하는데 조력한 다음, 자신들이 보유한 권위를 국가 안팎에서 행사해서 그들이 견지한 신념과 일치하는 도덕적, 종교적 사회를 건설하고자 했기 때문이다.

□ 주제어: 신유학자, 이슬람 개혁가, 조선, 유가관료, 울라마

The establishment of the Choson state was carried out by an alliance of military men such as Yi Song-gye and a group of scholar-officials eager to reform society by creating a new state based on the principles of Cheng-Zhu (Chongjuhak) Confucianism or Neo-Confucianism, it is called by Western scholars. These scholar-officials undertook a long-term effort to bring government, social institutions, and personal conduct into conformity with Neo-Confucian norms.

These scholar-officials carried out this project with a zeal and succeeded in remodeling Korean society according to the ideology of Neo-Confucianism to an extent that does not have an exact parallel elsewhere in East Asia. Chinese Neo-Confucian reformers in the Song greatly influenced their society, but they never had the command of the state. China never experienced such a long, sustained, and systematic effort to remodel the institutions of government and society. No Chinese government enforced adherence to orthodoxy as rigidly as in Korea. Some Chinese rulers, such as the first Ming emperor Hongwu (r. 1368-1398) and the Qing emperor Qianlong (r. 1736-1796), ruthlessly suppressed any sign of subversive thought, but this was aimed at threats to their authority, not to ideological orthodoxy. In Japan, Tokugawa rulers in the seventeenth century promoted Neo-Confucianism, however, no belief system was ever established as rigid orthodoxy. Buddhism retained an intellectual vigor lacking in Korea, Shinto was still associated with the emperor, and various nativist and heterodox Confucian schools of thought flourished. Vietnam's ruling class promoted Confucian doctrine from the fifteenth century, but as with Japan, it never became a rigid orthodoxy and Buddhism remained stronger than in Korea.

Perhaps a better parallel to the efforts by the Neo-Confucian literati at creating a virtuous society can be found in the Islamic revivals that characterized much of the Muslim world prior to the mid-nineteenth century. Islamic reform and revival movements after then were to some degree a response to Western imperialism or Western derived economic and political changes associated with modernization. Before then they were largely generated by internal developments and make for a better analogy to early Choson. There are number of examples of Muslim scholars serving and leading reform minded political movements such as the Almoravids movement in eleventh century Morocco or the Safavids in early sixteenth century Persia.¹⁾ Two more recent and well documented examples were the Wahhabi move-

ment of eighteenth-century Arabia and the Fulani Jihad of West Africa in the early nineteenth century. Both were, like their Korean counterparts, movements led by scholars and officials to reshape state and non-state institutions as well and societal norms in conformance with religious orthodoxy.

All three reform movements: that of the Neo-Confucianists of early Choson, the Wahhabis in Arabia and the Fulani reformers in West Africa were political and ideological. All were led by coalitions of zealous and devout scholars in alliance with ambitious members of the local or tribal elites from a warrior or military background. All established new dynasties that were not radical breaks with the past but were attempts to purify the political and moral order. Each under a new political dynasty sought to eliminate religious practices and social customs that deviated from the orthodox path. All found inspiration from newer interpretations of traditional beliefs first developed by foreign teachers and were influenced by external developments but were in good measure internally generated movements. Additionally all three resembled each other in the ways the orthodoxy was interpreted, transmitted and promoted.

Korean Neo-Confucianism as it emerged in the fourteenth and fifteenth century had many similarities to orthodox Sunni Islam. The differences of course are considerable. Unlike theo-centric Islam, for example, it does not generally fall into the universally accepted category of religion.²⁾ However, historians and other scholars have no universally agreed definition of religion and both Islam and Neo-Confucianism can be seen as self-validating, all embracing belief systems based on sacred texts. Korean Neo-Confucianism resembled orthodox Islam in that it encompassed a code of behavior governing nearly every aspect of life. Both were intolerant of rival beliefs and of ideological pluralism, and both were intensely political as well as moral. Both were concerned with establishing legal codes governing marriage, family, inheritance practices and the relations between men and women, and establishing a political order that enforced them. Islam which encompassed a

1) See Ronald Messier A, *The Almoravids and the Meanings of Jihad* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger Publishers, 2010); Andrew J. Newman, *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006).

2) Anna Sun, *Confucianism as a World Religion* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University, 2013), 1744; on the difficulty of defining religion in general see Feil, Ernst, *On the Concept of Religion*, trans. by Brian McNeil (Binghamton, NY: Binghamton University, 2000).

legal system (*fiqh*) and a comprehensive code of personal and social conduct *Shari'a*, like Korean Neo-Confucianism, made no sharp distinctions between governance and other aspects of society.

Neo-Confucian Scholars and Muslim '*ulamā*'

In both Sunni Islamic and Neo-Confucian societies there was no formal hierarchy of interpreters of sacred texts nor a professional priesthood. Moral authority in both societies lay in the hands of scholars and teachers who owed their religious authority to their mastery and understanding of sacred texts. It was the nature of these pious men and their aims that provide the greatest similarities between the Korean Neo-Confucianists and the Islamic reformers. The Korean reformers were scholar-officials often referred to as the *sadaebu* a term that came into common usage in the late thirteenth and fourteenth century. They have often been described by historians of Korea as a new class of small and medium landowners and petty officials. But as John Duncan has pointed out most came from prominent descent groups and distinguished themselves from the newer officials from the Mongol period with less prestigious backgrounds.³⁾ Whatever their social background, they were men of learning (Chinese *shi*, Korean *sa*) recognized by their peers and in their communities are moral leaders.

The scholar-teacher held an exalted position. Since organized religion was peripheral to Choson society, it was the school and the teacher, rather than the temple and the priest who served as the principal source of ethical counsel. Consequently, the scholar obtained an almost sacred status. The learned man was more than a scholar or teacher: he was the moral arbiter of society and source of guidance at the village as well as the state level. Thus, the value placed on learning and the position of the teacher in society were extremely high. Teachers, scholars, and earnest students were vested with considerable moral authority. This was the basis for the tradition of remonstrance, the right to issue formal protests based on ethical principles. It was the duty of the scholar to criticize the actions of the government,

3) John Duncan, *The Origins of the Choson Dynasty* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000), 86-87.

including the king; since Confucianism perceived the universe as a moral order, improper behavior on the part of officials and rulers threatened that order.

In Sunni Muslim societies the equivalent of *sa* were the *'ulamā* (singular *ālim*) a term that literally means those who possess learning and can be translated as simply scholar.⁴ The *'ulamā* often refers to the imams (leaders of public prayer) of prominent mosques, judges, and teachers, especially at prominent Islamic schools and universities. But it can include imams of village mosques and teachers at village schools as well. These latter were roughly equivalent to the country scholars and village school (*sodang, sojae*) teachers of rural Korea. The *'ulamā* were and are the guardians of legal and religious traditions in Islam. It is an informal position not part of a formal institutional hierarchy but based on reputation and general training and knowledge of Islamic texts and traditions. The *'ulamā* were apart from the state although many may have close relations with rulers. They often prevented the rulers from directly dictating law and could therefore act as a legal check on arbitrary power.

There were of course, major differences between the role of Islam and the *'ulamā* and the Neo-Confucian scholars. The *'ulamā* were technically outside the state, generally did not serve as government officials and their credentials were generally not validated by the state—there was no equivalent to the civil service exam. They were often thought of as playing a role as mediators between the state and the population rather as being part of the state structure. Their authority was based on the reputation they had among other scholars and ordinary people. Individually and as a group, their influence was often considerable but based more on networks of disciples and patronage rather than on formal institutions, although Islamic schools such as Confucian academies were important for training scholars and establishing disciple–follower bonds. Nonetheless, *'ulamā* often had ties to bureaucrats and officials. In many Islamic societies they also shared their role as moral leaders with Sufis but the later were generally much less involved in political affairs and did not lead the reform movements in Arabia and West Africa.

The Korean Neo-Confucianist reformers of the early Choson and the Islamic reformers in Arabia and West Africa sought to carry out reforms through pious rulers. In doing so they drew upon similar conceptions of rulership. Both traditions

4) John Esposito, *Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003) 325.

in somewhat different ways laid emphasis on the need for the ruler to maintain high moral standards and to be always aware of the moral dimension of his role in society. Confucianism taught that the prince upheld the moral and social order of society by his personal example of virtuous conduct and by governing with a concern for the welfare of his subject. Muslim scholars interpreted the role of the ruler in a similar manner even if it was rooted in a different cosmological view of the universe. He (female rulers were never acceptable) was responsible establishing a just order based on Islam, an order that reflected God's will and prepared the people for His final judgment and the next life. Reformers in Korea, as well as Islamic reformers in Arabia and West Africa made use of their respect traditions of literature to educate the rulers. In Islam this included a body of mirror literature that was addressed to rulers.⁵⁾ The best known of these was *The Book of Government* by Nizam al-Mulk (1018-1092) and *The Counseling of Kings* by al-Ghazali (1058-1111). These works held the purpose of government was to uphold a just order based on Islam. The ruler must not only maintain this order but be an example of justice who strived for religious and moral perfection.⁶⁾ In other words, the Muslim ideal of a ruler was much like that of the Korean Neo-Confucian one: a moral example to be emulated by the people.⁷⁾ Interestingly Confucianists also made use of the mirror analogy for didactic and historical literature to help guide the ruler.

The Neo-Confucian Revolution

Whether the establishment of the Choson state was a revolution or a mere change of dynasties is a question that historians disagree on. In the long-run it did bring about many changes in Korean culture and society but it was at least initially a largely bloodless change of power. For the most part, the state continued to be governed by the same officials that served in Koryo and the same elite lineages

5) Ira M Lapidus, *A History of Islamic Societies, Second Edition* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 149-152.

6) Lapidus, 206.

7) Lapidus, 155.

maintained their dominance over society. Only a small number of them were purged, such as the distinguished scholar Chong Mong-ju (1337-1392), who, while supporting the movement for reform, remained loyal to the old dynasty.⁸⁾ Rather than a replacement of one dominant social group by another, a number of new people joined the ruling aristocracy of landed officials and scholars. Indeed, most of the Neo-Confucian reformers came from aristocratic families. Kwon Kun (1352-1409), one of the leading members of the new government, came from the Andong Kwon clan, one of the most illustrious families under the old dynasty.⁹⁾ Yi Song-gye himself represented one of the small number of new men, mostly of a military background, who joined the old elite. Furthermore, the change of dynasty did not mean a sharp ideological change. Neo-Confucianism had already begun to gain adherents in late Koryo. Nor was Neo-Confucianism itself an entirely new way of thinking. To a large extent it was a revitalization of Confucian values and ideas of government and society that had long influenced Korean culture.

However, the late fourteenth and fifteenth centuries Neo-Confucian literati (*sa*) attempted to transform society in accordance to a vision of Confucian state that went differed from the past. Previously the Korean state had supported all religious and ritual positions. Koryo kings for example, promoted Buddhism, built temples, and developed a close relationship with the sangha. They also carried out Confucian rites, patronized shrines, incorporated Confucian text in the curricula for the civil service exams. They patronized shamans and supported mountain and other spirits of the land. But the Neo-Confucianists viewed all rituals and traditions other than that associated with their interpretation of Confucianism as detrimental to the project of creating a society based on the way. They wanted the state to promote orthodoxy and to end to all its links with other traditions. Ultimately, their aim was nothing less than the remaking of Korean society according to its principles.

The men, who were the ideological drivers of the Neo-Confucian reform

8) Donald N. Clark, "Choson's Founding Fathers: A Study of Merit Subjects in the Early Yi Dynasty," *Korean Studies* 6 (1982): 17-40.

9) Michael C. Kalton, "The Writings of Kwon Kun: The Context and Shape of Early Yi Dynasty Neo-Confucianism" in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, ed. William Theodore De Bary and Jahyun Kim Haboush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 89-123.

movement of the early Choson, were typified in Chong To-jon (1337?-1398). Chong's father was a government official from the lesser aristocracy. He was a descendant of a *hyangni* (local government official). A student of Neo-Confucian scholar Yi Saek (1328-1396), he was appointed to the National Confucian Academy faculty when Yi Saek became its head. Chong To-jon was driven into exile for pro-Ming sentiments by Yi In-im head of a powerful clan who at the time held the real reins of power. After living in poverty in a small village he went to Yi Song-gye's remote frontier camp and became his chief political advisor. When Yi came to power in 1388, Chong used his influence to secure key positions. As a civilian head of the armed forces command he worked toward abolishing private armies and creating a new central army under civilian control. Based on the Confucian ideal that the ruler governed in the interests of the welfare of his people, as well as the practical need to bring more land under government taxation, he called for converting all land into public land. This would then be distributed equally among all the peasants, who would then pay a small portion in taxes. Chong To-jon cited the idealistic picture of Zhou China in the *Rites of Zhou*, which had become part of the Confucian canon, to justify this proposal. While too radical for adoption, it illustrates the idealistic zeal of Chong and many of his colleagues.¹⁰⁾ His most important contribution was drawing up the *Statutes for the Governance of Choson*, an outline for the new government heavily influenced by Neo-Confucian concepts.¹¹⁾ Many of the institutions of the new dynasty were based on this outline.

Neo-Confucianists relied on several institutions to promote their reform agenda. They relied on the censorate, the classics mat and the civil examination system to carry out their project. The censoring organs were the moral guardians or moral police of the state. Since most censors were well schooled in the tenets of Neo-Confucianism and were firm adherents of them, the organs acted as one of the institutional bases for the great undertaking of making Korea a model

10) Han Yeong-u, *Jeong Do-jeon's Philosophy of Political Reform*, in Korean National Commission for UNESCO, ed. *Korean Philosophy: Its Tradition and Modern Transformation*. (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym, 2004).

11) Chung Chai sik. "Chong Tojon: 'Architect' of Yi Dynasty Government and Ideology" in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, ed. by William Theodore De Bary and Jahyun Kim Haboush (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 59-88.

Confucian society. Another base for Neo-Confucian reformist zeal was the Classics Mat (*Kyongyon*). Modeled on the Song China *jingyan* advocated by the Neo-Confucianist thinkers Cheng Yi (1033-1108) and Zhu Xi (1130-1200), the Classics Mat was instituted as a lecture program that in 1392 was organized with a staff of twenty-one. Although the first three Yi kings seldom attended, the fifteenth-century king Sejong (r.1418-1450) attended daily. Later in the fifteenth century it met three times a day. Censors, historians, and a royal secretary attended. At these sessions the reader would read and lead a discussion of the Confucian classics and commentaries on the classics by such luminaries as Zhu Xi. The Classics Mat was designed to guide the monarch, and it served as an agency for promoting Neo-Confucian concepts at court. And they used the curriculum of the civil service examinations as another means of indoctrinating the members of the ruling class into orthodoxy thought. Since passing the exam was the most important means of acquiring state office and validating status basing the exams on the orthodox Neo-Confucian canon inculcating its values and beliefs. Another feature of the Yi dynasty was the significant role of the state historians. They too promoted Neo-Confucian ideals. Choson-era Koreans regarded history and the role of the historian as matters of great importance. As good Confucian scholars, they viewed history as an indispensable source of guidance for those that governed and as a source of moral tales providing examples of virtue and vice that would instruct all who read it. Since history was valuable for instruction for both governance and morality, historical works were included in the Classics Mat. Through their writing of history, Yi dynasty historians promoted the ideals and principles of Neo-Confucianism.

The Neo-Confucian reformers were especially hostile to Buddhism. They chided monks for their moral laxity and their involvement in politics. The example of Sin Ton, who served as King Kongmin's chief advisor, was a case in point. Neo-Confucianist reformers were also critical of the expense of supporting temples and of elaborate rituals. Temples, they felt, owned too much land, reducing the tax base. Some officials of the new dynasty such as Chong To-jon regarded Buddhism as an undesirable alien faith. Buddhism, in their opinion, did not respect the social relations that held society together. Its tradition of celibacy was a threat to family and lineage, and its concept of abstract universal love was inimical to

the graded love of Confucianism that gave primacy to family, then to friends, and then to neighbors. It encouraged withdrawal from society, not active participation in it. However, this harsh antipathy was not shared by Yi Song-gye or by many of the members of court. It was a minority view at the start of the dynasty. Instead, Yi Song-gye, emphasized continuity, not radical change. At the onset of his reign he ordered that all the rites of the Koryo be observed. T'aejong (r. 1400-1418) moved more vigorously against the Buddhist establishment, closing temples, confiscated land. But he continued to consult Buddhists calling upon monks and shamans to perform rain rituals. Members of the royal family continued to patronize Buddhism for the first century of the dynasty, and sometimes consulted shamans. Indeed, the monarchs in general, were less enthusiastic about radical change than the Neo-Confucianist reformers.

The attempt to reform Korean society continued for many decades. Fruits of this effort found its way into a new law code the *Kyongguk taejon*, compiled in 1469. Laws required all Koreans to perform the rites to their ancestors (*chesa*). The strict rules prohibiting kin marriages were enforced. Zhu Xi's *Family Rituals* (Chinese: *Jiali*, Korean: *Karye*) became the basis for rules governing marriage ceremonies and practices. Neo-Confucian scholars stressed direct male descent and the subordination of women to men. They were especially concerned with the proper relations between men and women. Women were urged to obey their fathers in youth, their husbands in marriage, and their sons in old age. Books written for women emphasized virtue, chastity, submission to one's husband, devotion to in-laws, frugality, and diligence. Moral literature, a great deal of which was published under the Yi, emphasized that women should be chaste, faithful, obedient to husbands, obedient to in-laws, frugal, and filial. Some of this literature was published by the state. To promote these values, the state in 1434 awarded honors to women for virtue. The official legal code, the *Kyongguk Taejon*, forbade upper-class women from playing games and from partying outdoors with penalties of up to 100 lashes. Horse riding, a common activity among upper-class Koryo women, was forbidden by law in 1402. Women had to seek the permission of husbands or family heads before participating in social activities. Upper class women were not allowed to attend services at Buddhist temples or any public festivals.¹²⁾

12) Michael J. Pettid, *Unyong-Jon: A Love Affair at the Royal Palace of Choson Korea* (Berkeley,

Moving state and society toward orthodoxy was a long term project but it was largely a successful one. By the early sixteenth century state support of non-Confucian rituals ended. Choi Mihwa for example, has pointed out how the *Suryak chae* (Water and Land) Buddhist death ritual for deceased kings while performed in the fifteenth century was eventually seen as incompatible with the state exclusively devoted to a single ideology.¹³⁾ Although Neo-Confucianism grew out of the long tradition of Confucian thought, it was revolutionary in its insistence that the state and society be structured according to the moral principles that governed the universe.

Thus Korea became a state with a rigid, mutually exclusive ideology, possessing an official intolerance more characteristic of most premodern Christian and Muslim societies than with its more inclusive and tolerant past. Eventually under the influence of Neo-Confucianism Korean society and culture went through profound changes. As a result of Neo-Confucianism, Korea under the new dynasty did see major changes in the family, the role of women, the conduct of the *yangban*, and art and literature. In the long run, then, what took place in Korea is sometimes called a Neo-Confucian Revolution. These changes, however, took place gradually over several centuries. By the eighteenth century did Korea become the model Confucian society that most modern Koreans see as traditional.

The Wahhabi and Fulani Revolutions

The Wahhabi revolution in eighteenth century Arabia movement and the Fulani Jihad in the early nineteenth century West African Sudan had many parallels with the Neo-Confucian movement in early Choson. In both reformist minded *'ulamā*, aligned themselves with political or military leaders to bring about out a rectification of society much in the way that Neo-Confucian thinkers did with the establishment of the Choson state. All three set in motion a long-term project to

Cal: University of Californian Press, 2009), 8.

13) Choi Mihwa, "State Suppression of Buddhism and Royal Patronage of the Ritual of Water and Land in the Early Choson Dynasty," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies* 22:2 (December 2009): 181-214.

transform their societies.

While more than three centuries later the Wahhabi movement of the eighteenth century bore some interesting analogies to the Neo-Confucian revolution in late fourteenth and fifteenth century Korea. The Wahhabi movement was founded by Muslim scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (d. 1791) sought to purify Islamic society by rejecting all the innovations (*bid'a*) and returning to the original mode of behavior and practice of the first Muslim community in Mecca and Medina. Abd al-Wahhab's beliefs were derived from the thirteenth century Hanbalite legal scholar Ibn Taymiyya who taught an intolerant, puritanical form of Islam based on careful reading of the *Qur'an* and the *hadiths* (the teaching and practice of Muhammad).¹⁴⁾ Since it had emerged in the seventh century, Islam evolved into a complex system of doctrine and law. Ibn Taymiyya, however, found only the original revelations of God and the life and deeds of the Prophet as the proper guide to a godly society and directed his attention on understanding them. In some ways Ibn Taymiyya was the Zhu Xi of the Wahhabis, the definitive interpreter of the faith.

The Wahhabi movement which began in the Najd region of eastern Arabia was largely a product of internal developments rather than a response to European colonialism or Ottoman state consolidation.¹⁵⁾ It had its origins in the religious reform/revivalist movement led by *'ulamā*, some like Wahhab had studied outside of region, and in the political ambitions of tribal leaders in Najd. The Wahhabis or *muwahiddun* (Unitarians) as they called themselves, were especially concerned with purging Islam of Sufism and of the practice of venerating saints. The latter they argued was tomb worshipping, and thus in violation of Islamic belief that Allah was only object of worship.¹⁶⁾ They were also opposed to Sufism, the mystical form of Islam that had emerged as a major component of Islamic practice. They sought to create a political order that put God at its head, and the Prophet as its guide to a godly behavior. As in the case of the Neo-Confucian literati they saw the Way or path (*tariqa*) compromised by non-orthodox religious practices.

14) Michael Crawford, *Ibn'Abd al-Wahhab* (London: One World Books, 2014), 8-15

15) Natana J De Long-Bas, *Wahhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7-8.

16) Hamid Algar, *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay* (Oneonta, New York: IPA, 2002), 33-34.

Their aim was to return to the forms what they believed was way of the original Muslim community before it had been corrupted by non-Islamic practices.

Ibn Wahhab in 1744 formed an alliance with an ambitious tribal chief Muhammad ibn Saud (d. 1765). Najd was at this time was largely an impoverished region, and a political vacuum of feuding tribes. Ibn Saud then created the Emirate of Diriyah. From this modest base Ibn Saud under the banner of Islamic reform united the tribes in much the same way as Muhammad had done in the seventh century. From Najd he led an expansion continued by his son that eventually achieve control over much of Arabia including the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. During the reign of Ibn Saud and his son and successor Abdul Aziz bin Muhammad (r.1765-1803) the state tried to reform all of society in accordance to the Wahhabis strict interpretation of Islam.¹⁷⁾ Although much of their initial focus was no eradicating the veneration of saints they soon turned their attention to reforming criminal law, marital customs, music, festivals and almost every aspect of life. The Wahhabis promoted the strict segregation of women for which they are most noted for today. Ibn Saud and his son were instructed by Wahhabi *'ulamā* and appointed them as judges and teachers. The father and son monarchs attempted present themselves as examples of piety often personally leading their subjects in prayers.

With support of the Ibn Saud new state in Arabia, the Wahhabis destroyed the shrine to Muhammad and other revered figures in Mecca and holy shrines of the Shi'ites in Karbala. The rise of the new Wahhabi state of the Ibn Saud dynasty was cut short by its defeat at the hand of the Egyptians in 1818 who intervene to protect the holy places in Arabia. It was later resurrected by a descendant of Ibn Saud in 1932. The Wahhabi revolution as a political movement suffered a setback, but the zealous Wahhabi *'ulamā* continued their attempt to purify society and remold social institutions and practices in accordance to their interpretation of Islam; their success led to the creation of twentieth century Saudi Arabia.

About the time the Wahhabis began expanding beyond Najd another Islamic reform another Muslim puritanical reform movement the emerged from the *'ulamā* in Hausa speaking region of West Africa, an area that covers much of what is now northern Nigeria and southern Niger. The Fulani Jihad as it is often called also began as religious movement of among reform minded *'ulamā* who aligned them-

17) Algar, 222-223.

selves with tribal leaders. In the late eighteenth century an ethnically Fulani prominent Islamic religious teacher and scholar Usman dan Fodio (1754–1817) began criticizing the way the Hausa rulers were practicing Islam. The faith, he charged, was being mixed with pre-Islamic indigenous religious practices and as a result people were not living according to the right path of Islam. Rulers were allowing the free mixing of men and women, dancing at bridal feasts and in engaging in immoral behavior. Rather than acting in a righteous manner they were levying unjust taxes, forcing inscription into the military and confiscating the private property of their subjects.¹⁸⁾

Usman belonged to a long tradition of itinerant Muslim scholars in the region who offered advice, and at times, criticism to rulers for not ruling in a pious manner. He was joined by other scholars some most likely influenced by the Wahhabis in Arabia. By the 1780s he had considerable following.¹⁹⁾ Usman allied himself and his followers with Fulani tribal leaders including his brother Sheikh Abd Allah ibn Muhammad. In a series of military campaigns 1804–1808 they ousted them and created a new caliphate in the region—the Sokoto Caliphate 1809. His son Muhammad Bello became the first Caliph. Usman, like the Neo-Confucianists in Korea, placed great importance in establishing righteous, pious rulers who would set an example for the rest of society. Under the new Sokoto Caliphate the sultan appointed *'ulamā* as judges and advisors, and reformed and enforced new laws on the laws of inheritance based on *the Shari'a*. Muslims were limited to four wives, divorce and alimony had to adhere to religious regulations, and men and women were prohibited to mix at social events. Alcohol was not permitted and meat inspectors were placed in the markets to see that dietary laws were enforced.²⁰⁾ The effort to reform the Muslim practice took years to carry out. In fact, the campaign to promote adherence to Islamic law achieved full vigor after Usman's death in 1817. But like the efforts in Arabia they eventually did reshape the customs, institutions and practices in the region.

18) Hamza Muhammad Maishanu and Isa Muhammad Maishanu, “The Jihad and the Formation of the Sokoto Caliphate,” *Islamic Studies*, 38:1 (Spring 1999), 119–31.

19) David Robinson, “Revolution in the Western Sudan” in Nehemia Levtzion and Randall L. Pouwels, eds, *The History of Islam in Africa*, (Athens, Ohio: University of Ohio Press, 2000), 131–152.

20) Robinson, 144–149.

Comparisons with the Neo-Confucianist Revolution

There are considerable differences in the Islamic revolutions in Arabia and West Africa and the Neo-Confucian revolution in Korea. Wahhabis were resurrecting a unified state in Arabia that had disappeared centuries earlier and the Fulani were creating an entirely new one in the Hausaland region of West Africa. In Korea the establishment of Choson was a change of dynasties with far more institutional continuity. The Korean Neo-Confucianists never had a single charismatic leader such as ibn Wahhab or Usman dan Fodio. Nor were monarchs of the Yi dynasty as committed to the revolution - they were far more accepting of traditions than the ibn Sauds or the Fulani tribal leaders. While the Saudis dynastic founders used the zealous scholars for their own advancement much as did the early Yi rulers, the Fulani case differs since Usman put his son on the throne establishing a new dynasty.

A major difference is in the nature of the Neo-Confucian scholar ideologues who had their base within the institutions of the state. There were part of and identified with officialdom to far greater extent than did the Islamic *'ulamā* reformers. Nor were Korean Neo-Confucianists as militant as these Muslim zealots in imposing total orthodoxy of belief and practice upon their lands. Buddhism continued to survive with several thousand temples dotting the countryside; even members of the elite called upon its monks at times for spiritual needs. In addition, Shamanism remained widely practiced and occasionally received discreet patronage from officials. Perhaps because it was more a code of social, political, and personal conduct than a religion in the conventional sense, Confucianism, even in its more mystical Neo-Confucian forms, could not satisfy all the spiritual needs of the people. However, both Muslim reformers and Neo-Confucianists recognized the need to accept some local customs and traditions. In Korea these were sometimes called *kuksok* (country's practices). An analogous concept in Islam was referred to as *urf* (custom) also in parts of the Islamic world known as *adat*. These involved local customs and practices such as dress, celebrations and mannerisms that the Muslim community can maintain as they do not directly contradict Islamic law.²¹⁾ However, this concept is more commonly used among Southeast Asian Muslims

21) John Esposito, *Oxford Dictionary of Islam* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 6, 328.

than those in the Middle East and Africa. The Islamic reformers, in general, showed less tolerance for non-Muslim traditions.

Yet the similarities are also striking. Almost every social custom was impacted by the new religious norms. Relations between men and women, for example, were a key part of their agenda. Islamic and Neo-Confucian reformers assumed the proper relations between men and women were foundational to creating a moral society. They decried the mixes of the sexes at festivals, at social gatherings or in the marketplace. Eventually went to great lengths to place restrictions of the movement of women and took measures to insure that their conduct was under the control of their fathers, husbands, brothers or sons. There was also a shared concern for the rituals of observance- ancestral rites or in the case of Muslim careful practice of the times of prayer and fasting. Perhaps most significantly the three revolutions resembled each in the both the role the scholar-teacher-preachers played in advising and staffing the state, and in influencing society at the local level. In each case the persistency by which these reformers through scholarly lineages continued with their project of promoting a godly/virtuous society were quite similar.

All three movements were largely successful in propagating their vision of a moral community until it penetrated at all levels of society. In all cases it took considerable time for the reform movements to achieve many of their goals. In fact, it was the continued efforts of generations of scholar-zealots that brought about a deep transformation of their societies. Korea by the late Choson had become a profoundly Confucian society. By the twentieth century Hausaland had been turned into a thoroughly Islamic society where Muslim customs and values prevailed over indigenous ones, Saudi Arabia into an uncompromising Wahhabi society. In all three it was the role of scholar-teacher and moral leader that was key to bringing about this change.

- ▶ Submitted : 2016. October. 20
- ▶ Reviewed : 2016. November. 22
- ▶ Accepted : 2016. December. 5

References

- Algar, Hamid. 2002. *Wahhabism: A Critical Essay*. Oneonta, New York: IPA.
- Choi, Mihwa. 2009. "State Suppression of Buddhism and Royal Patronage of the Ritual of Water and Land in the Early Choson Dynasty," *Seoul Journal of Korean Studies*, 22:2.
- Chung, Chai-sik. 1985. "Chǒng Tojǒn: 'Architect' of Yi Dynasty Government and Ideology" in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, ed. William Theodore De Bary and Jahyun Kim Haboush. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Clark, Donald N. 1982. "Choson's Founding Fathers: A Study of Merit Subjects in the Early Yi Dynasty." *Korean Studies*, 6.
- Crawford, Michael. 2014. *Ibn'Abd al-Wāhhab*. London: One World Books.
- Duncan, John. 2000. *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*. Seattle: University of Washington Press.
- Eposito, John. 2003. *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- _____. 2003. *Oxford Dictionary of Islam*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Han, Yeong-u. 2004. "Jeong Do-jeon's Philosophy of Political Reform" in *Korean National Commission for UNESCO*, ed. Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym.
- Kalton, Michael C. 1985. "The Writings of Kwon Kun: The Context and Shape of Early Yi Dynasty Neo-Confucianism" in *The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea*, ed. William Theodore De Bary and Jahyun Kim Haboush. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Lapidus, Ira M. 2002. *A History of Islamic Societies*, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Long-Bas, Natana J De. 2004. *Wāhhabi Islam: From Revival and Reform to Global Jihad*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Maishanu, Hamza Muhammad and Isa Muhammad Maishanu. 1999. "The Jihad and the Formation of the Sokoto Caliphate," *Islamic Studies*. 38:1.
- Newman, Andrew J. 2006. *Safavid Iran: Rebirth of a Persian Empire*. New York: I.B. Tauris.
- Pettid, Michael J. 2009. *Unyŏng-Jŏn: A Love Affair at the Royal Palace of Chosŏn*

Korea. Berkeley, Cal.: University of Californian Press.

Robinson, David. 2000. "Revolution in the Western Sudan" in Nehemia Levitzion and Randall L. Pouwels, eds, *The History of Islam in Africa*. Athens, Ohio: University of Ohio Press.

Ronald, Messier A. 2010. *The Almoravids and the Meanings of Jihad*. Santa Barbara: CA. Praeger Publishers.

Sun, Anna. 2013. *Confucianism as a World Religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University.