

Huma



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

## ASSIGNMENT 2 PRECIS, YONGJO'S RULE: POLITICS OF PATRIARCHY

(OPTION 2) Linda Zhang (209783143) Tutorial # 7 (Friday 10: 30 am- 12: 30

am) T. A: Jane Kim Date of Submission: October 27, 2008 Yongjo's diligent emphasis on being a king for the people was constructed through his ploy in creating politics of patriarchy by representing himself as the ruler-father figure for his populace. He reached to the people in order to promote his image and hence gain popularity.

By doing so, it enabled him the power over his bureaucratic oppositions in enforcing policies which he thought was beneficial for the entire society. The bureaucracy in theory was by no means, an obstruction for the king. For most of the time, they should serve the crucial purpose of being a medium between the monarchy and his populace. In reality though, when the bureaucrats were the ones who enforced orders in the society, they often abused their powers and advocated social hierarchy in effort of preserving their own status. To the bureaucrats, the issue of social reform was seen as a clash towards their own benefits. So it was natural for their opinions to differ from those of the monarch. On the other hand, the king thought of restructuring The Military Tax as a top priority since the treasury depletion crisis worsened due to increases in the population of tax-exempted Yangbans.

Each of the monarch and the bureaucrats had to defend their perspectives with the use of Confucian rhetoric. While the bureaucrats adopted a hierarchical approach of Confucian rhetoric, stating that they are the guardians of Confucian traditions and thus it is important for the Confucian state to protect them. The king wanted a more egalitarian approach to

Confucian ideology. With conflicts imposed between the hierarchical approach and the egalitarian approach, the king thought after the support of his people.

His unprecedented action was applied partly out of urgency. The Confucian social order, supposedly composed of small numbers of elites and large populations of peasants and slaves, was, rendered obsolete by Eighteenth Century as it no longer represented the reality. According to the consensus, Yangbans had increasingly occupied a greater proportion of the population due to the trend of upward social mobility. Well-to-do farmers were able to purchase the Yangban title, increasing examinations created more scholars to receive the title, while others were able to forge the title. One significant problem, increases in irregular examinations created masses of scholars who are prestigious degree holders, however, the government positions was always reserved to those who had illustrious ancestors. Yongjo was aware of this problem, but he was powerless to correct it. The bureaucrats were unsupportive, not only on this issue, but also on other issues such as legitimatizing concubine children's status, changing the penal codes and especially in reforming Military Tax.

By 1723, a commoner had to pay four times the amount of tax he should legally pay. After conducting a through research on the situation, Yongjo realized that introducing household tax was the best solution in solving the crisis. He waited for the opportunity to realize his plan, and that moment came in 1750 with the growing of a national epidemic. Yongjo was able to cause fear in the bureaucrats by presenting his research results, and this in turn, eventually finalized the tax reform.

## ASSIGNMENT 2 CRITIQUE, YONGJO'S RULE: POLITICS OF PATRIARCHY

(OPTION 2) Linda Zhang (209783143) Tutorial # 7 (Friday 10: 30 am- 12: 30

am) T. A: Jane Kim Date of Submission: October 27, 2008 Yongjo's Rule:

Politics of Patriarchy which is abstracted from JaHyun Kim Haboush's

novel The Confucian Kingship in Korea: Yongjo and the Politics of

Sagacity demonstrates the author's interpretation of King Yongjo and

his relationships with the bureaucrats. Through Kim's detailed description

of the complex interaction between the king and his officials, it is obvious

that the author's intention is to illustrate the interplay between Confucian ideology and the reality of politics exercised by Yongjo and his bureaucrats.

Throughout this chapter, the author describes Yongjo as an illustrious king,

one who devotes his life to sage kingship and uses moral authority to rule his

country. However, she has also recognized that Yongjo might not have

pursued it [moral exemplar] with such single-mindedness had he not thought

it useful to his rule (Kim Haboush, 83). King Yongjo's effort to acquire

his power through the demonstration of his extraordinary virtues reflects the

emphasis on Confucian ideology in the Korean society.

Hence, it is no doubt that Confucian ideology has played an important role in

politics. When King Yongjo purposed Military Tax Reform to solve the

treasury depletion crisis, both the king and his bureaucrats defended their

own objective in the name of Confucian rhetoric. The bureaucrats who have

saw the reform as a threat to their own profit is eager to maintain the

system. Hence, they have adopted a hierarchical approach to Confucian

rhetoric by stating that they are the guardians of Confucian traditions and

thus it is important for the Confucian state to protect them. The king on the

other hand, who has interest in the good of the general society, has approached Confucian rhetoric with a more egalitarian tone.

The outcome, as described by Kim is ??? a clear instance in which the egalitarian approach of the throne and the hierarchical approach of the bureaucracy came in a clash??? (Kim Haboush, 85). Her detailed analysis of how Confucian ideology are used in the dynamic Korean political atmosphere further highlights her effort in grasping how the Confucian rhetoric are applied to different political players with different political agendas. Through Kim??™s use of unfriendly tones toward the bureaucrats, implying them as greedy individuals who have ??? vested interest in preserving their status??? (Kim Haboush, 83), it is obvious that the author has more affinity for Yongjo. Kim has gone to a great length in her chapter to convince readers that the king??™s actions, especially in that of the Military Tax Reform, are wise. Her objective is clearly displayed when she explicitly described every aspect of how the Yangban??™s increasing population has harmed the entire society. Through the application of comprehensive evidences, Kim penetrates every aspect of the bureaucrats to convey her message. She first mentions the social problem of escalating gaps between the rich and the poor by writing ??? The economic status of those who remained commoners, however, seems to have deteriorated rather than improved ??| large holdings [of arable land] grew larger while small holding were divided even further??? (Kim Haboush, 99). Kim then tackles the growing tax evasion problem by pinpointing the source of the crisis as a result of corruptions taking place in lower governmental structures, ??? though illegal [tax evasion], this practice was widespread.

Local and other officials overlooked legal technicalities either out of negligence, greed, or even fear of the powerful??? (Kim Haboush, 100). Here, Kim has associated the malfunction of the tax system to social endemic. On the other hand, Yongjo??™s urgent action of supporting the Military Tax Reform is behooved and respected by Kim. Throughout the chapter, Kim has adopted an appreciative tone towards King Yongjo, she constantly accentuates the positive attributes of the king, and through analyzing her use of dictions and tones, it is clear that she reveals admiring attitudes towards the king. The author describes Yongjo as a smart, strategic person who dedicates himself in being a ruler??™ father figure to obtain the support that empowers him over his bureaucratic oppositions. She vividly tells the story of Yongjo, documenting all of his trials and tribulations. Kim describes Yongjo??™s alteration of the Confucian rhetoric into politics of patriarchy as an ingenious move by praising ??? One is tempted to say that it was his politics of patriarchy that distinguished Yongjo??™s reign from others. At least, in making contact with the people, he was transcending accepted norms??? (Kim Haboush, 103 & 104).

In addition, Kim has also hinted that Yongjo has been strategic in his effort of reforming the military tax by writing ??? in September 1749, about nine month before he tackled the Yangban in earnest, Yongjo announce to his officials that the had written a set of ritual regulations which referred to as the ceremony of expressing sympathy to the people??? (Kim Haboush, 106). Through the king??™s action of staging the ceremony as a platform for him to connect with his people, there is not doubt, that the king has made a clever move as perceived by the author. Kim??™s approbation for the Yongjo

may have been sourced due to the fact that she agrees with the king's egalitarian approach to Confucian ideology. Or, it might just be the fact that she has a high regard for the king due to his supreme virtue over others and his ability in reaching out and connect with his populace. Bibliography Kim Haboush, JaHyun.

The Confucian Kingship in Korea: Yongjo and the Politics of Sagacity. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.