



The Relationship between People and Ruler: A Comparison of Dasan Jeong Yagyong and King Jeongjo

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Abstract

The similarity of Dasan Jeong Yagyong and King Jeongjo derives from the belief that the ruler should carry out politics for the people. According to Dasan, the ruler is chosen by the people or appointed by the Mandate of the Lord on High. The former reveals Dasan's ideal view of politics, while the latter conveys his realistic perspective. He claims that the Mandate represents the will of the people; thus, the ruler was chosen by them. The ruler being appointed by the Mandate is similar to Jeongjo's thought. However, Dasan believes that the ruler learns the rules of the Mandate by observing the people, as opposed to Dasan's belief that the ruler should be assisted by a minister in possession of that knowledge. Although Jeongjo makes no mention of the people's selection of their ruler, he regarded himself as father of the people, believing the ruler should care for the people as his own children. Consequently, Jeongjo tried to strengthen his royal power. Dasan also viewed the ruler as father of the people; thus, the ruler's duty was to ensure the people lived properly. To achieve this, the ruler had to reform the system of governance and therefore required strong royal authority.

Keywords: people, Mandate of Heaven, ruler, appoint, dismiss, Matteo Ricci, Mencius

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Introduction

Dasan Jeong Yagyong (1762–1836, pen name: Dasan), a Confucian scholar during the Joseon dynasty (1392–1910), said that people should choose a wise man as their chief or ruler in order to resolve their conflicts. He also emphasized that they could dismiss and replace their ruler if he failed to perform his mission. By contrast, King Jeongjo 正祖 (1752–1800; r. 1776–1800) and some scholar-officials argued that the ruler was appointed by the Mandate of Heaven. Interestingly enough, Dasan was a royal secretary (*seungji* 承旨) of Jeongjo, and together they shared the common goal of using politics to serve the people. However, despite their obvious similarities, their individual remarks on the appointment of the ruler had crucial differences. I will explore those differences in this study.

To date, most researchers have explored the political philosophies of Dasan and Jeongjo separately, rather than comparing one with the other. Park Hyun-mo (2003) studied the position of the monarch from Jeong Yagyong's perspective, but only made occasional references to Jeongjo. In English, Don Baker (2013) presented an introduction to Dasan's political philosophy, while King Jeongjo's philosophy was reviewed by Christopher Lovins (2012). There have also been several articles on Dasan's political thought in Korean, which will be engaged with further below (Jo 1976; Baek 2008, 81–118; J. Yi 2018).¹ Using the “Wonmok” 原牧 (Inquiry into the Roots of the Ruler), “Tangnon” 湯論 (Discussion of [the Chinese Sage-Emperor] Tang), and “Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon” 一周書克殷篇辨 (Discussion on the Conquest of the Yin Dynasty by Wu) as guides, many researchers argue that Dasan's notion of the popular selection of the ruler implies a democratic element (Jo 1976; Im 2007; Baek 2003; Han 2002; G. Kim 2005; Y. Kim 2001; H. Kim 1982; J. Yi 2017). Their opinion, however, is not unanimously shared (Baker 2013; Lee 2013). These researchers overlooked the ruler appointed by the Mandate of the Lord on High aspect in the “Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon.” Im Hyeong-taek (2007) and Kim Tae-yeong (2000) considered

1. One researcher has studied Jeongjo's political thought (S. Kim 2012) and another Jeongjo's reform policies (J. Kim 2008).

the ruler being chosen by the people and the ruler being chosen by the Lord on High, as found in Dasan's works, to be a contradiction. However, Baek Min-jeong (2008) did not interpret it so. They also overlooked the people's selection of a ruler in the first natural community as found in the "Wonmok," as well as during the time of King Tang and King Wu, in the "Tangnon" and "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon,"² respectively. Moreover, Dasan stated that the ruler and the local chief are the people's parents.³ Therefore, this paper focuses on the relationship between the people and their ruler according to the words of Dasan. In Dasan's philosophy, the ruler chosen by the Lord on High and the ruler seen as the people's parent have similarities with the thinking of King Jeongjo. However, the people's choice of their ruler as found in Dasan's works differs from King Jeongjo's belief. Owing to this, I will compare the relationship between the people and their ruler in the works of King Jeongjo and Dasan.

The Ruler Chosen by the People in the First Natural Community or Appointed by the Mandate of Heaven

In the "Wonmok," "Tangnon," and the "Hudae" 侯戴 (People's Choice of Their Ruler) chapter of the "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon," Dasan states that the ruler is chosen by the people. However, in the "Jemyeong" 帝命 (Mandate of the Lord on High) chapter of the "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon," he affirms that the same ruler is chosen by the "Lord on High." According to King Jeongjo, the ruler is appointed by the Heavenly Mandate, which is the equivalent of the Mandate of the Lord on High, thus making Jeongjo's words in the "Jemyeong" similar to the ones used in Dasan's "Hudae."

The people's selection of a ruler is laid out in detail in three important works of Dasan: the "Wonmok," "Tangnon," and "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon." In the "Wonmok," Dasan states that, initially, people chose

2. "今人以秦以後之眼，仰視秦以前之天，其萬事萬物，無一非倒景斜光，湯武其最大者也，其與秦以後之法，天壤不侔者，厥有兩端，一曰：帝命；一曰：侯戴" (Jeong Yagyong 2002b, 267c).

3. "天生斯民，先爲之置田地，令生而就哺焉，既又爲之立君立牧，令爲民父母" (Jeong Yagyong 2002d).

a wise man to resolve their conflicts. The first natural human society⁴ was classless and the people soon asked for an arbitrator to resolve conflicts among them. Therefore, they elected a chief, who then convened with other chiefs and together they elected a ruler.⁵ In “Tangnon,” Dasan added to what he had already discussed in the “Wonmok,” emphasizing that people could not only appoint, but also subsequently dismiss, their ruler for poor performance. Similarly, according to the “Tangnon,” the people could also appoint a chief or downgrade him to an ordinary member of the community (Jeong Yagyong 2002h, 243c). This meant that the ruler was also an ordinary member of the original community. The critique of Dasan, “Where did the Son of Heaven come from, anyway? Did Heaven have his Son descend to earth like rain and make him ruler?” (Jeong Yagyong 2002h, 243c), implied that the ruler was not appointed through a Mandate of Heaven but was, instead, elected by the people:

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4. Confucian scholars believed the ideal way of selecting a ruler was the way King Yao handed over the throne to King Shun. Yao had his officials recommend a wise man and they recommended Shun, and so Yao appointed Shun as his official. Shun did well, and Yao handed the kingship to him and Shun subsequently ruled the people well. See *Shujing* 書經 (Classic of Documents), 1.12–40. Mencius explains this in more detail. He believed that King Yao did not hand over the kingship to Shun, but that Heaven gave it to him. Mencius believed that Yao recommended Shun to Heaven to be the ruler, Heaven accepted him, showed him to the people, and the people accepted him. See Mencius, 5.1–2. However, Dasan believed that people electing their own rulers was natural and ideal; when local rulers exploit their people, the people can use politics to institute changes, because they had elected the ruler themselves. This was more realistic than Mencius’ position. Dasan’s remark that the people choose their ruler was not an argument to change the then monarchical system of Korea into democracy, but rather an explanation of what had happened in the first natural society. Previous research has overlooked this (Im 2007, 24–27; Y. Kim 2001, 96–97; Ham 2007, 395; T. Kim 2000, 221; Park 2003; Baek 2008).
 5. “遼古之初，民而已，豈有牧哉？民于然聚居，有一夫與鄰闕莫之決，有叟焉善爲公言，就而正之，四鄰咸服，推而共尊之，名曰：里正，於是數里之民，以其里闕莫之決，有叟焉俊而多識，就而正之，數里咸服，推而共尊之，名曰：黨正，數黨之民，以其黨闕莫之決，有叟焉賢而有德，就而正之，數黨咸服，名之曰：州長，於是數州之長，推一人以爲長，名之曰：國君，數國之君，推一人以爲長，名之曰：方伯，四方之伯，推一人以爲宗，名之曰：皇王” (Jeong Yagyong 2002j, 213d–214a).

Where did the Son of Heaven come from, anyway? Did Heaven have his Son descend to earth like rain and make him ruler? Or did he sprout from the earth like spring water and become ruler? Five families constituted one neighborhood (鄰), and they elected the wisest man among them to be the community chief; five communities formed a hamlet, and they elected the wisest man among them to be the hamlet chief; five hamlets constituted a township and they elected the wisest man among them to be the town mayor; and the ones who were jointly supported by acclamation of the town mayors became feudal lords; and the one jointly supported by acclamation of the feudal lords became the Son of Heaven. Thus, the Son of Heaven became [the ruler] through the acclamation of the people. If the people supported him by acclamation, he would become [the ruler]; if not, he would not.⁶

Summarizing, Dasan implied that people in a small city-state could directly appoint and dismiss a ruler. However, since the Joseon dynasty ruled over a large state, Dasan expressed the idea that the people could only appoint a ruler indirectly (J. Yi 2017, 162). Therefore, in Dasan's works, the people's indirect election of their ruler still implies a direct choice. Dasan says that in early society five families in a small neighborhood community directly chose their chief (Jeong Yagyong 2002h, 243c). According to Dasan, dancers also directly chose their leader when eight rows of eight dancers performed in the courtyard. This emphasizes Dasan's belief that people in a small community could also directly select their chief. However, this did not mean that they could directly choose their overall ruler. Accordingly, since the first society was structured in such a way that people could choose their ruler, Dasan emphasized the role of the ruler as he who managed politics on behalf of the people. Dasan's remarks in this regard came in the context

6. “夫天子何爲而有也? 將天雨天子而立之乎? 抑涌出地爲天子乎? 五家爲鄰, 推長於五者爲隣長; 五鄰爲里, 推長於五者爲里長; 五鄙爲縣, 推長於五者爲縣長; 諸縣長之所共推者爲諸侯, 諸侯之所共推者爲天子, 天子者, 衆推之而成者也. 夫衆推之而成, 亦衆不推之而不成” (Jeong Yagyong 2002h, 243c). According to “Tangnon,” when the ruler fails to carry out his duties properly, he must return to his original position as a feudal lord. This is based on Dasan's view of human equality (Tsai 2014, 202), and corresponds to the ideal of equality in modern politics (Tsai 2014, 205).

of a time when most township heads used their authority to exploit the people. Dasan's contemporary approach differed from that of the scholar-officials, who maintained a firm belief that Heaven appointed, approved, and supported a given ruler. A key difference between King Jeongjo and Dasan is that Jeongjo did not go so far as to say that people could choose and dismiss their ruler, because he wanted to govern unchallenged. However, Jeongjo recognized that *farmers are the foundation of the state*,⁷ as their harvests and taxes fed its people and funded it, respectively. Consequently, in Jeongjo's works, the farmer was portrayed as the foundation of the state (Jeongjo 2001, 26.413d). This idea emphasized that a ruler should govern according to the interests of the people. In this regard, Jeongjo's concept of the people as the foundation of the state was similar to Dasan's.

Dasan's "Tangnon" referred to historical examples, including that of Tang 湯 (r. 1617–1588 BCE), the founder of the Shang 商 dynasty (ca. 1600–1046 BCE). Although he was the king's subject, Tang dethroned the tyrannical King Jie 桀 of Xia 夏 (?–1600 BCE)—an action that was justified on the basis of it being in accordance with the people's wishes. According to Dasan, this was no coup; it was the proper course of action. This idea dates to Mencius (372–289 BCE), who argued that the removal of a ruler was not necessarily a coup. In the Mencian view, assassination could occur as a means of implementing humanity and righteousness. According to the book attributed to Mencius, Tang dethroned Jie the way one would kill a brigand as punishment⁸; Mencius' interpretation was that such actions were in accordance with the will of the people. This belief was formed due to the fact that the people were oppressed by the tyranny of King Jie of Shang and King Zhou 紂 (?–1046 BCE) of Shang, along with their subordinates, Tang of Shang and Wu 武 (?–1043 BCE) of Zhou 周. Therefore, Mencius could be considered as a harbinger of people-oriented political thought. Nevertheless, Mencius maintained that a dynastic change could only occur through the actions of feudal lords, like Tang and Wu; the people did not

7. 王若曰：民者國之本，而農者又民之本也。

8. “齊宣王問曰：湯放桀，武王伐紂，有諸？孟子對曰：於傳有之，曰：臣弑其君可乎？曰：賊仁者謂之賊，賊義者謂之殘，殘賊之人謂之一夫，聞誅一夫紂矣，未聞弑君也” (Mencius 1B8).

have autonomous authority. According to Mencius, the people did not have the right to vote or revolt against their ruler.⁹ This perspective of Mencius, which regarded Tang and Wu's removal of Jie and Zhou as just, influenced Dasan. The difference between Mencius and Dasan's beliefs comes from the people's capacity of appointing and dismissing the ruler in their community, as stated in the "Tangnon."¹⁰ Dasan reiterates this belief in the "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon,"¹¹ a sequel to his "Tangnon."¹² As previously noted, Dasan wrote earlier in his "Wonmok" that people could choose their ruler. This was extended in "Tangnon," where he argues that the people could also dismiss their ruler. Finally, Dasan re-emphasizes his previous statements and confirms in "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon" that the people should be allowed to select and reject their ruler. The people's selection of their ruler occurred in the first natural community in "Wonmok," and during the time of Tang and Wu in "Tangnon" and "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon." However, Dasan's intention was not to use this philosophy as an argument to change the monarchy into democracy.¹³ Jeongjo regarded Tang and Wu as

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9. See Tiwald (2008, 272). By contrast, most scholars maintain that Mengzi held the opinion that people had the right to rebel against a tyrant. See Tu (1993); Cheng (1998); Ching (1998, 72); Twiss (1998, 41–44).
 10. Kim Yong-hun (2001) noted that Mencius did not state that the people could choose their ruler; instead, he asserted that the Mandate of Heaven was above both ruler and people, an idea that was not part of Dasan's philosophy. However, Baek Min-jeong offered a different interpretation, namely that the Mandate of Heaven was referenced by Mengzi, as well as in Dasan's "Mandate of the Lord on High" chapter in "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon" (Baek 2008, 14–42), which argued that a revolution was based on both the will of the people and the Mandate of Heaven (*cheonmyeong* 天命) (in Dasan, Mandate of Heaven is usually rendered as *cheonmyeong* rather than *jemyeong* 帝命). However, Kim Tae-yeong (2000, 188–189) noted that Dasan argued for popular rights, which implied reforming the royal authority-centered society to make it a people-centered one.
 11. “民聚而求其長，長列而求其帥，各立一帥，名之曰：侯。侯之中有翹楚，相與會議以戴之，名之曰天子。天子之子若孫不肖，諸侯莫之宗也，亦安而受之，有舊發以中興者，諸侯復往朝之，亦安而受之，不問其往事也。有暴虐淫荒，以殘害萬民者，則相與會議以去之，又戴一翹楚者，以爲天子，其去之者，亦未嘗殄其宗祀，滅其遺胤，不過退而復其原初之侯位而已” (Jeong Yagyong 2002b, 267d).
 12. “余昔作湯論，今又書此以續之” (Jeong Yagyong 2002b, 268a).
 13. Previous researchers have overlooked this (Im 2007, 24–27; Y. Kim 2001, 96–97; Ham 2007, 395; T. Kim 2000, 221; Park 2003; Baek 2008).

benevolent and righteous men, and refers to Tang as a sage.¹⁴ Jeongjo's view that Tang and Wu had conquered Jie and Zhou for the good of their people was consistent with that of Dasan. Also, they both refer to the philosophy of Mencius. Jeongjo held Tang in higher esteem than King Wu, because the people of the Xia dynasty did not rise in revolt against Tang's removal of King Jie; conversely, the people of the Yin dynasty rebelled soon after Wu dethroned King Zhou. Though Jeongjo might as well have condemned Tang and Wu for conquering their rulers, he justified their actions as righteous instead. This reaction was influenced by Mencius and it is similar to Dasan's. By contrast, King Xuan of Qi 齊宣王 interpreted Tang and Wu's actions as mutinous,¹⁵ since, personally, he feared such an uprising. Though they were both rulers, King Xuan tried to maintain a strong royal authority, while Jeongjo made every effort to rule in the interests of the people, in line with Dasan's political philosophy.

According to Dasan, Tang and Wu's conquests of King Jie and King Zhou occurred through the assistance of ministers Yi Yin 伊尹 (1630–1550 BCE) and Jiang Shang 姜尚 (1156–1017 BCE), respectively, based on the Mandate of Heaven.¹⁶ Thus, he specifies in the "Wonmok," "Tangnon," and "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon" that the replacement of a ruler could be supported by the ministers. This meant that the ministers scrutinized the royal authority, and the Mandate of the Lord on High (jemyeong 帝命) represented the will of the people.¹⁷ According to this, Dasan implied that the power of the ruler should be based on the will of the people and the assistance of wise ministers, such as Yi Yin and Jiang Shang, who recognized

14. "桓文之節制, 不可以敵湯武之仁義" (Jeongjo 2001, 29.476b); "成湯聖人也" (Jeongjo 2001, 29.495a).

15. "齊宣王問曰: 湯放桀, 武王伐紂, 有諸? 孟子對曰: 於傳有之, 曰: 臣弑其君可乎?" (Mencius 2B9).

16. "其云帝命者何? 古人事天, 皆誠信而忱畏之, 非如後世爭王之人, 憑依假託而稱天也, 厥有虔心, 昭事之人, 格于上帝, 能躬承密訓, 灼知天命, 爲帝王者, 不得此人, 不敢以爲國, 承祖考之緒者, 得此人然後, 能致治以中興, 值鼎革之際者, 得此人然後, 能受命而肇業, 故少康得靡, 以復禹緒, 太戊得陟, 以正殷綱, 湯得伊尹, 以代夏政, 文武得尙父, 以殪商戎, 非其智謀才術無敵於天下也, 乃其神明之衷, 能格知天命, 故立之爲師, 詢其言而順之, 故方其出師而伐罪也" (Jeong Yagyong 2002b, 267c).

17. "人心離而天命去" (Jeong Yagyong 2002j, 212c).

the people's will. Dasan believed that in China during the ages of Tang and Wu, the people could indirectly appoint and dismiss a ruler; however, while he believed a ruler could be removed from office, he did not call for the monarch's replacement through a democratically elected council. Rather, he writes that a king who has lost the support of the people can be rightfully replaced, not by the uneducated masses, of course, but by the elites, as illustrated in the case of Tang's rise against Jie.

Therefore, Dasan justified Tang's removal of Jie in the "Tangnon" and Wu's removal of Zhou in the "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon." While Dasan states that Tang and Wu's actions were possible through the assistance of ministers Yi Yin and Jiang Shang, supported by the Mandate of the Lord on High (Jeong Yagyong 2002b, 267c), Jeongjo writes of Tang and Wu's removal of Jie and Zhou to save the people without mentioning any ministerial assistance.¹⁸ This omission shows that Dasan emphasized the authority of ministers, whereas Jeongjo focused on royal authority. Nevertheless, influenced by Mencius, both Dasan and Jeongjo regarded Tang and Wu's removal of Jie and Zhou as just.

Dasan's "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon" refers to "Fengjian lun" 封建論 (On the System of Enfeoffment) by Liu Zongyuan 柳宗元 (773–819), a Confucian scholar of the Tang 唐 dynasty (618–907). However, Liu never specifically states that the people can dismiss their ruler. He merely claims that long ago, when the people experienced conflict in their community, they would congregate around a wise man. This wise man would then become the lord, and the lords would congregate around a ruler who would eventually command all the people.¹⁹ This is similar to Dasan's argument on the people's choice of a chief and coincides with his views, insofar as the people would first choose a wise man who they hoped would be able to resolve their problems. However, unlike Dasan, Liu did not state that the

18. "湯武之征伐, 爲生民切, 有不得已爲者" (Jeongjo 2001, 121.498a).

19. "又有大者, 眾群之長又就而聽命焉, 以安其屬, 於是有諸侯之列, 則其爭又有大者焉. 德又大者, 諸侯之列又就而聽命焉, 以安其封, 於是有方伯, 連帥之類, 則其爭又有大者焉. 德又大者, 方伯, 連帥之類又就而聽命焉, 以安其人, 然後天下會於一, 是故有裏前而後有縣大夫, 有縣大夫而後有諸侯, 有諸侯而後有方伯, 連帥, 有方伯, 連帥而後有天子" (Liu Zongyuan 1979, 43–44).

people could dismiss a chief who failed to govern well. Jeongjo appreciated Liu's argument that the people could choose their leader, considering this a detailed theory.²⁰ However, Jeongjo also believed that the state could not be governed fairly by the people. He presumed that Liu did not understand the ideal politics of a sage,²¹ as governance was done not by the people but by a wise ruler.

An opinion similar to Dasan's can be found in "Yuanjun" 原君 (Roots of Chinese Royal Authority) by Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695): "The state, including the people, are the master while the ruler is the guest."²² Huang makes no mention of the people selecting their ruler, but rather writes of the service of the ruler on behalf of the state, including the people.²³ Dasan commented on Huang Zongxi in his *Maessi seopyeong* 梅氏書平 (Comments on Mae's Annotation of the Book of Documents) (Jeong Yagyong 2002f, 271a). It may be interesting to note that the title of Dasan's article, "Wonmok" 原牧 may have been influenced by the title "Yuanjun" 原君, of Huang Zongxi (Baek 2008, 9).

The passage on choosing a chief in the *Tianzhu shiyi* 天主實義 (True Meaning of the Lord of Heaven) by Matteo Ricci (Li Madou), reflects views similar to those of Dasan: "The pope...has no heirs to his patrimony; instead, a good man is elected to succeed him."²⁴ However, the pope is elected by cardinals, not by the people. This point diverges from Dasan's thoughts, although Dasan might have read the passage on the cardinals' election of the pope,²⁵ which had already been quoted in Yi Sugwang's

20. "子厚之論後出,而衡稱時勢甚詳" (Jeongjo 2001, 111.250a).

21. "大抵,子厚以封建爲非聖人之意者,語雖新奇,終不達聖人公天下之心" (Jeongjo 2001, 111.250a).

22. "古者,以天下為主,君爲客" (Huang Zongxi 1985).

23. "有人者出,不以一己之利爲利,而使天下受其利,不以一己之害爲害,而使天下釋其害.此其人之勤勞必千萬於天下之人.夫以千萬倍之勤勞而已又不享其利,必非天下之人情所欲居也" (Huang Zongxi 1985).

24. "主教者之位...無有襲嗣,惟擇賢而立" (Li Madou [Matteo Ricci] 1923, 140).

25. According to the *Jeongjo sillok*, (13th day of the 11th lunar month, 1791), Dasan read *Tianzhu shiyi* and *Shengshi churao* (若鏞或以,天主實義,聖世芻蕘等語,轉送於臣,故臣不能不寓目.自是厥後,對若鏞,未嘗不論及此書). Therefore, it is quite possible he could have read the passage on the cardinals' election of the pope.

李晔光 (1563–1628) *Jibong yuseol* 芝峯類說 (Complete Works of Yi Sugwang).²⁶ A crucial difference between Dasan and Ricci is that the case of impeachment by the people does not actually appear in *Tianzhu shiyi*. By that time, Dasan had confessed that he had been deeply engrossed in Catholic books.²⁷ Therefore, Dasan's reference to the people's choice of the ruler would have been influenced by the process of electing the pope that appears in the *Tianzhu shiyi*. According to the *Chuguk ilgi* 推鞠日記 (Daily Records of Interrogation),²⁸ Yi Seunghun, Dasan's brother-in-law, who was baptized in 1784 by Father Grammont in Beijing, testified before the Eugeumbu 義禁府 (State Tribunal) that Dasan had been baptized by Yi Seunghun 李承薰 (1756–1801) together with his elder brother, Jeong Yagjeon 丁若銓, and Gwon Ilsin 權日身 (?–1791). According to Charles Dallet, Yi Seunghun baptized Yi Byeok 李蘖 (1754–1785) and Gwon Ilsin (Dallet 1874, 22). Dallet called Dasan by the name Jean Tieng Iak-iong (Dallet 1874, 117). Jean, referring to the disciple of Jesus and author of one of the Gospels (John, in English), and Tieng Iak-iong being a French romanization of Dasan's name. Although Dasan stopped reading Catholic books after Jeongjo's prohibition order,²⁹ the Catholic ideology remained an integral part of his thinking thereafter. Dasan's interest in the papal elections while reading *Tianzhu shiyi* derived from the fact he was planning to establish Catholic organizations together with his older brothers, Yakjeon, Yi Seunghun and Gwon Ilsin (Dallet 1874, 30). Ricci's *Tianzhu shiyi*, Liu

26. Ahn Jeong-bok 安鼎福 (1712–1791) who was a student of Yi Ik 李穡 (1681–1763), quoted this passage from the *Jibong yuseol* in his *Sunam jip*: 芝峯類說曰: “大西國, 有利瑪竇者...所著天主實義...其俗謂君曰: 教化皇, 不婚娶故無世襲嗣, 擇賢而立之” (Ahn 1996, 17.140c–d). This then influenced Dasan.

27. “從李蘖游, 聞西教見西書, 丁未以後四五年, 頗傾心焉” (Jeong Yagyong 2002c, 339b).

28. “身與丁若銓·若鏞·權日身輩, 相會於李蘖家, 而果有代洗等事, 依倣其書而爲之” (*Chuguk ilgi*, 8.259a, 18th day of the 2nd lunar month, 1801).

29. “辛亥以來, 邦禁嚴遂絕意” (Jeong Yagyong 2002c, 339b). That year (*sinhae* 辛亥) was the 15th year of King Jeongjo's reign (1791). Dasan stated that he did read the Catholic books and was banned from ancestral rites: “而至於廢祭之說, 臣之舊所是書, 亦所未見” (Jeong Yagyong 2002g, 202c). Dasan recommended holding a memorial service for the people's ancestors (‘故臣就議按道之臣, 講搜捕之方, 而發其隱匿, 諭禍福之義, 而曉其疑怯, 設斥邪之祿, 而勸其祭祀, 執守邪之女, 而成其婚嫁, 復求一鄉之善士, 而相與質疑送難, 以講聖賢之書’ [Jeong Yagyong 2002g, 202d–203a]).

Zongyuan's "Fengjian lun," and Huang Zongxi's "Yuanjun" inspired Dasan to create his own doctrine—the popular selection of the ruler. However, Jeongjo rejected Catholicism, including Ricci, which he considered heretical as Confucianism was the national policy.³⁰

To sum up, Dasan relates how the people chose their ruler—both appointing and dismissing—in his "Wonmok," "Tangnon," and "Hudae" 侯戴 (People's Choice of Their Ruler) of the "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon." However, in his chapter "Jemyeong" 帝命 (Mandate of the Lord on High) of the "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon," Dasan also writes that the ruler was appointed by the Mandate of the Lord on High. Considering this, the content of "Hudae" and "Jemyeong" would appear contradictory. What is Dasan's truth? In his opinion, the Mandate of the Lord on High actually denotes the mind of the people: "When the mind of people is gone, the Mandate of Heaven will leave."³¹ Thus, Yi Yin and Jiang Shang had known the mind of people and, consequently, the Mandate of the Lord on High"; therefore, they assisted Tang and Wu's removal of Jie and Zhou.³² The ruler was chosen by the people or by the Lord on High before the Chin dynasty (221–206 BCE).³³ The former option reveals Dasan's ideal vision of politics, while the latter reveals his realistic approach to the matter of governance. Therefore, Dasan did not propose to change the monarchy by incorporating the people's will in the choice of ruler because it was impossible to do so. Conversely, he suggested that the ruler should be assisted by ministers knowledgeable of the mind of the people. However, his final goal was to

30. "年前西學之弊，今則庶不至漸染，而邪說之肆行，由於正道之晦塞，苟欲扶植而講明，莫如先正其本" (Jeongjo 2001, 164, 208c). At that time, Catholicism was referred to as *seohak* 西學 (Western Learning).

31. "人心離而天命去" (Jeong Yagyong, 2002j, 212c).

32. According to some scholars, the ruler chosen by the people and by the Mandate of the Lord on High in the "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon" are opposing statements. Some posit that mentioning the Mandate of the Lord on High's appointment of the ruler disregards the people's freedom and reason (Im 2007, 38; T. Kim 2000, 223). Other scholars, however, see the two theories not as complete opposites, but closely related—the Mandate of the Lord on High actually denoting the will of the people (Baek 2008).

33. "今人以秦以後之眼，仰視秦以前之天，其萬事萬物，無一非倒景斜光，湯武其最大者也，其與秦以後之法，天壤不侔者，厥有兩端，一曰：帝命；一曰：侯戴" (Jeong Yagyong 2002b, 267c).

implement a way for the people to choose their own ruler.

According to Jeongjo, the ruler ascended the throne through the Mandate of Heaven, and this reflected the will of the people. Therefore, the ruler should sincerely consider the people's best interests.

My dynasty was founded by King Taejo, and the ancestors were virtuous and benevolent to the people for a long time. Owing to that, it was from four kings, the ancestors, that it was first mandated by the Heavens.³⁴

A prior Confucian scholar interpreted it as follows: "It was possible to know through the minds of the people whether the 'Mandate of Heaven' had changed or not." This is true.³⁵

To Jeongjo, it was the people who entrusted a ruler with the Mandate of

34. “又以我朝王業，創於太祖，而積德累仁，發祥基命，實自四王始” (Jeongjo 2001, 183.563b). The four kings refer to the great-great-grandfather down to the father of King Taejo Yi Seonggye 李成桂 (1335–1408, r. 1392–1398), the founder of the Joseon dynasty. Taejo's great-great-grandfather was King Mokjo Yi Ansa 穆祖 李安社 (?–1274), his great-grandfather was King Ikjo 翼祖 李行里 (?–?), his grandfather King Dojo 度祖 李椿 (?–1342), and his father King Hwanjo 桓祖 李子春 (1315–1361). They were all given the posthumous title of king by King Taejo in 1392 (and granted such a title again by King Taejong [1367–1422, r. 1400–1418] in 1411). Jeong Manseok 鄭晩錫 (1758–1834), who participated in a symposium on the Confucian Classics with Jeongjo and other scholar-officials, claimed that a ruler was chosen by Heaven (Jeongjo 2001, 79.173–174). This was Jeong Manseok's answer to Jeongjo's question in a debate on Mencius. According to Jeong, when Heaven supported the Xia dynasty, Tang did not intend to conquer the Xia. However, when Heaven ceased supporting the Xia, Tang was able to conquer it. Accordingly, a dynasty can continue only if Heaven supports it, and one can only become a king with the support of Heaven. At that time, Jeong Manseok, and many other scholars, supported this belief based on the idea that Heaven makes the ruler, according to the *Shujing* (10.1) and the Mencius quotation from it (Mencius 1B3.7). This belief is also reflected in Yi Chongseop's 李宗燮 response to Jeongjo's question during the debate on *Daxue* 大學 (The Great Learning) (至若前王之屬於文武，雖以雖舊維新之詩觀之，周家之受天命，豈不始於文武之時乎? [Jeongjo 2001, 68.576]) and in Seo Yuku's response to Jeongjo's question (以見文王伐密之事，實出於天命而已 [Jeongjo 2001, 91.409]) during a debate on the *Shijing* 詩經 (Classic of Odes) at the Royal Library. In this, they were influenced by Zhu Xi (廢興存亡惟天命，不敢不從，若湯武是也 [Zhuzi yulei 56.11]) as well as the Six Classics.

35. “先儒釋之曰：天命之改與未改，驗之人心而已” 此固然矣 (Jeongjo 2001, 76.117d).

Heaven. Since a ruler was dependent on the taxes he received from the people, Jeongjo believed that the people were the foundation of the state.³⁶

Between 1781 and 1791, many scholar-officials participating in Jeongjo's symposium debated the Confucian classics and history at the Royal Archives (Imunwon 摛文院) of the Royal Library (Gyujanggak 奎章閣) or at the Office of Special Advisers (Hongmungwan 弘文館).³⁷ Jeongjo educated scholar-officials (*chogyae munsin* 抄啓文臣)—including Dasan, whom he had personally chosen—in the Four Books, the Three Classics and the *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian), a work of Sima Qian (145–86 BCE).³⁸

Jeongjo firmly believed that the ruler was appointed by the Mandate of Heaven. According to Dasan's "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon," Tang dethroned King Jie, and Wu conquered King Zhou; this was Heaven's command. However, Dasan clearly stated in the "Tangnon" that the people could dismiss their ruler (Jeong Yagyong 2002h, 243c). Contrastingly, following the theory of the Mandate of the Lord on High (*jemyeong* 帝命) in the "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon," Dasan stated that Yi Yin was a minister who knew the rules of the Mandate of Heaven; thus, he dethroned King Jie and assisted Tang. Thus, Tang's removal of King Jie had been authorized by Heaven. The people's indirect appointment and dismissal of a ruler are part of the theory of the people's selection of a feudal lord, in "Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon" and "Tangnon." Following the theory of the Mandate of the Lord on High, Dasan argued that a minister, well-versed in the idea of the Mandate of Heaven, was required to prevent autocracy; in other words, ministers were needed to balance royal authority.³⁹ Dasan's argument for the people's election of the chief in the "Tangnon" and "Wonmok" implied

36. “王若曰：民者，國之本” (Jeongjo 2001, 26.413d).

37. Scholar-officials of the royal lecture (*gyeongyeon* 經筵) sometimes attended these debates. Most kings of the Joseon dynasty discussed the Confucian Classics and history with scholar-officials on a daily basis. Jeongjo's goal with these royal lectures was to improve his competence in politics.

38. *Jeongjo sillok* 正祖實錄 (Veritable Records of King Jeongjo), 18th day of the 2nd lunar month, 1781.

39. By contrast, Park Hyun-mo (2003, 23) argued that Dasan sought to weaken ministerial power and strengthen royal authority.

a policy aimed at preventing the town chief from exploiting the people. According to Dasan, the Mandate of Heaven required righteousness in the mind of man, whether ruler, minister, or member of the community, according.⁴⁰ Therefore, the people's indirect choice, or dismissal, of a ruler should be based on righteousness, the Mandate of Heaven, and popular will. Jeongjo does not state that the people could choose their own ruler, as Dasan maintains. According to Jeongjo's own view, the people are the foundation of the kingdom,⁴¹ as he operated the kingdom with the people's taxes.

According to Jeongjo, the ruler was chosen by the Heavenly Mandate and can know the mandate through the minds of the people. This is similar to Dasan. In his writings, Jeongjo argues the ruler can know the heavenly mandate directly, while Dasan argues that the ruler should be assisted by ministers who know the mind of the people; there is a difference between Dasan's *jemyeong* and Jeongjo's *cheonmyeong*.

The Ruler as Father to the People

Jeongjo regarded himself as the Great Ultimate (*taegeuk* 太極) and the full moon,⁴² in which all things were united.⁴³ Like a full moon illuminating the surface of rivers,⁴⁴ Jeongjo saw himself as enlightening his subjects and raising his people as his children.⁴⁵ Therefore, he had educated the scholar-

40. Baek Min-jeong (2008, 14) interprets Dasan's theory of the Mandate of the Lord on High as most others have. Some believe that Dasan's "Mandate of the Lord on High" was derived from human-focused Neo-Confucianism (*Chujahak* 朱子學). See Han (2005) and Yi (2003).

41. "王若曰: 民者, 國之本" (Jeongjo 2001, 26, 413d).

42. "太極者, 吾也" (Jeongjo 2001, 10.159c). Jeongjo likened himself with the moon shining over the surface of rivers. That is, he thought that he enlightened his subjects and people. Jeongjo's "Owner of the Universe Written Preface" (*Mancheon myeongwol juinong jaseo* 萬川明月主人翁自序) is evidence that Jeongjo was an enlightened monarch. See Yi Tae-jin (1992), Kim Seong-yun (2012, 116–120), and So Jin-hyeong (2010).

43. "九州萬國, 統於一王; 千流百派, 歸於一海; 千紫萬紅, 合於一太極" (Jeongjo 2001, 10.159b).

44. "摠其水之大本, 則月之精也, 吾知其水者, 世之人也, 照而著之者, 人之象也, 月者太極也, 太極者吾也, 是豈非昔人所以喻之以萬川之明月?" (Jeongjo 2001, 10.159c).

45. "爲民父母, 寧忍使斯民顛連也?" (Jeongjo 2001, 26.414b).

officials personally selected by him—the *chogye munsin* 抄啓文臣 (scholar-officials chosen by King Jeongjo). In his view, all officials were the root of the people, the royal court was the root of officialdom, and the ruler's mind was the root of the royal court. Fittingly, Jeongjo, as the ruler, was the ultimate root of the kingdom. Furthermore, he believed in the importance of understanding the wise teachings of King Yao, Confucius, and other scholars through knowledge of the Confucian Classics.⁴⁶ It is clear that Jeongjo viewed himself as a wise ruler.⁴⁷

According to Dasan, heaven made rulers to be parents to the people,⁴⁸ and rulers made their ministers instruct the people.⁴⁹ Therefore, the ruler should pay mind to the rich and poor, so more taxes might be collected from the rich and less from the poor, thus allowing them to live equally well. As such, Dasan's conclusion to his *Gyeongse yupyo* 經世遺表 (Treatise on Government) was that the ruler can be regarded as a father figure to his people.⁵⁰ Accordingly, the ruler should distribute the lands equally among farmers,⁵¹ and so Dasan argued in favor of implementing the well-field system. Through this system, the ruler should purchase land from landlords and distribute this land to farmers within the terms mentioned above.⁵² In Dasan's time, the ruler could not purchase land, hence Dasan argued that

46. “竊自有得乎義農堯舜禹湯文武孔孟程朱之緒餘者，尙亦不問可知爲萬川明月主人翁” (Jeongjo 2001, 53.336b–c).

47. Jeongjo was the last powerful king of the Joseon dynasty and the most successful of the latter half of that dynasty. See Lovins (2012) and Kim Haboush (1998).

48. “天生斯民，先爲之置田地，令生而就哺焉，既又爲之立君立牧，令爲民父母，得均制其產而竝活之” (Jeong Yagyong 2002d, 194a).

49. “昔舜紹堯，咨十有二牧，俾之牧民，文王立政，乃立司牧，以爲牧夫，孟子之平陸，以芻牧喻牧民，養民之謂牧者，聖賢之遺義也，聖賢之教，原有二途，司徒教萬民，使各修身，大學教國子，使各修身而治民，治民者，牧民也” (Jeong Yagyong 2002e, 270d).

50. “先王之察民貧富，以正賦斂之差如是，況在後世，兼并日甚，富者田連郡縣，貧者室如懸磬，爲民父母者，其所以察民貧富也” (Jeong Yagyong 2002a, 194d); “舊輕之鄉，增之使平，舊重之鄉，減之使平，舊平之地，因之使平，增者怨之，而操法者不驚，減者頌之，而操法者不德，然後方可曰爲民父母” (Jeong Yagyong 2002a, 194a).

51. “天生斯民，先爲之置田地，令生而就哺焉，既又爲之立君立牧，令爲民父母，得均制其產而竝活...試以十口爲一戶，則每一戶得田一結，然後其產爲均也” (Jeong Yagyong 2002d, 233a–b).

52. “若其所憂則有一焉，古者，天子諸侯爲田主。今也，羣黎百姓爲田主，斯其所難圖也，必持之數百年不撓，收之有漸，行之有序而後，乃可以復先古之法” (Jeong Yagyong 2002a, 85d).

the ruler had originally owned all the territory of the country, based on the “Hwanggeuk” 皇極 (Supreme Principles) and the “Hongbeom” 洪範 (Grand Norms) portions of the Shujing 書經 (*Classic of Documents*).⁵³ The ruler as a parent and the people’s selection of their ruler are contradictory terms, since people cannot choose their parents. As stated above, Dasan did not suggest a reform to the monarchy into a democratic institution allowing the people to choose their ruler, but he proposed a reform of the landlord system into the well-field system. That was, in his opinion, a way to save the people, and so the ruler needed to implement the system precisely because of his position as father to the people.⁵⁴ As can be observed, both Dasan and Jeongjo considered the ruler to be father of the people. However, while in the works of Dasan the ministers teach the people, in his works, Jeongjo specifies that the ruler teaches both the people and the subject, including the *chogyae munsin*. However, Dasan argued for the abolition of the *chogyae munsin* system. Considering that scholar-officials could help the ruler to practice *good politics* through petitions or expostulations, Dasan considered

53. “洪範曰：皇建其有極，敘時五福，用敷錫厥庶民，此之謂也，故天下之田，皆王田也，天下之財，皆王財也；天下之山林川澤，皆王之山林川澤也。夫然後王以其田，敷錫厥庶民，王以其財，敷錫厥庶民，王以其山林川澤之所出，敷錫厥庶民，古之義也。王與民之間，有物梗之竊，其敘時之權，阻其敷錫之恩，則皇不能建極，民不能均受，若貪官污吏之橫竊，豪商猾賈之權利者，是也” (Jeong Yagyong 2002a, 210a).

54. Park Hyun-mo (2003) saw a contradiction between the people’s choice of their ruler and the strengthening of the royal authority. Im Hyeong-taek (2007, 24–27) also interpreted “Wonmok” and “Tangnon” as at variance from the Gyeongse yupyo, considering the former impracticable in reality, and the latter as viable. That is, the ideal proposal of the popular selection of the ruler changed into the more realistic proposal in Dasan’s later period. Other researchers interpreted the two ideas in a similar manner as Im (Y. Kim 2001, 96–97; T. Kim 2000, 221). By contrast, Baek Min-jeong (2008) sees the ruler in the Gyeongse yupyo as having been already chosen by the people, therefore the notion of the ruler strengthening his own power presents no contradictions in the works, “Wonmok,” “Tangnon,” “Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon,” and Gyeongse yupyo. However, at that time Dasan did not propose reforming the monarchy into a system of popular election of the ruler. In the “Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon,” Dasan writes that the people choosing their ruler was a practice in China prior to the Chin dynasty (221–206 BCE). The strengthening of royal authority in Korea was considered in order to keep the people from starvation. In the *Gyeongse yupyo*, Dasan specifies that strong royal power gives the ruler the capacity to purchase land from landlords and redistribute it to the people. Previous researchers overlooked this aspect.

it inappropriate to be educated by the ruler as his children, as he states in the *Gyeongse yupyo*.⁵⁵ In the “Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon,” Dasan writes how the ruler needed the assistance of his subjects, using as exemplars Yi Yin and Jiang Shang, who understand the requirements that the Mandate of the Lord on High demanded of the ruler,

Conclusion

Dasan and King Jeongjo had similarities and differences in their respective cognition of the relationship between people and ruler. But their shared goal was governance in the interests of the people.

In three of his works, “Wonmok,” “Tangnon,” and “Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon,” Dasan states that the people can choose and dismiss a ruler who does not conduct politics in the people’s interests. However, at that time, Dasan did not argue for a change in the governing system from hereditary monarchy to the popular selection of the ruler; he only argued that governors exploiting the people should, in fact, carry out politics *for the people*, since they were originally chosen by them. However, in his “Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon,” Dasan argues that the ruler can be crowned through the assistance of a minister knowledgeable of the Mandate of the Lord on High. At first glance, this may seem to be the opposite of what he initially argued. But what he meant by this as expressed in the “Wonjeong” 原政 (The Root of Politics) was that the ruler could be crowned with the assistance of a minister knowledgeable of the mind of the people, because the Mandate of Heaven itself represents the mind of the people. Therefore, the ruler is actually chosen indirectly by the people. Similarly, King Jeongjo also argues that the ruler is appointed by the Mandate of Heaven, but he understands the Mandate as knowledge acquired directly by the ruler through observing the minds of the people. Jeongjo educated his scholar-officials (the *chogyae*

55. “凡一經此選者，意氣沮蹙，不敢抗顏論事，終身嫵媚，便作人主之私人，此又法制之未善者也。人臣之通籍金闕者，凡有所蘊，或上疏而論事，或戲議以輔政，無所不可，顧何屈必之爲舉子，以試其所蘊哉？臣謂抄啓課試之法，自今停罷，宜矣” (Jeong Yagyong 2002a, 18b).

munsin system), as well as the people, but according to Dasan, the scholar-officials are capable of assisting the ruler, therefore the chogye *munsin* system should be abolished.

Dasan argues the people should appoint their ruler, but is there an inherent contradiction when he also says the ruler is the parent of the people? In Dasan's time, the people were starving because of landlords and the solution Dasan envisioned was the ruler purchasing land from the landlords and redistributing it among the people, but in reality this was impossible as the king could not purchase land. Owing to this, Dasan posited that the theory of the "Hwanggeuk" 皇極 (Supreme Principles) be applied, meaning that, originally, all land was owned by the king. The application of this theory in reality, however, required the strengthening of royal authority. Likewise, King Jeongjo also insisted on a more powerful royal authority. However, while Dasan considered strengthening royal authority to save the people, Jeongjo's desire for greater royal authority derived from his belief that he needed it in order to be able to govern the people as their parent. Furthermore, Dasan thought that scholar-officials could assist the ruler to govern for the people, while Jeongjo believed that the ruler should enlighten his scholar-officials and care for the people as he would his own children.

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