

Power and Violence between the Choosers and the Chosen in the Thought of Dasan Jeong Yak-yong

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Abstract

According to Dasan Jeong Yak-yong, a ruler was chosen by the people as a chief who could resolve conflict. People in a community chose group leaders and then finally chose a ruler. Therefore, rulers could be ousted if they did not play their roles properly, which equated to righteous power in Dasan's thought, because the ruler would be ousted for not supporting the people or developing harmony among them. If a ruler abused his power or failed to carry out his responsibilities, provincial leaders could replace him, a mechanism rooted in the people. Therefore, the people could supplant the ruler. However, Dasan did not state implicitly that the people could replace the ruler, but rather that provincial leaders should decide, because Dasan advocated strengthening sovereign power in the case of King Jeongjo. Dasan illustrated the exemplary relationship between the people and the ruler through examples of rebellious subjects during China's Yin Dynasty. Dasan acknowledged that even a good ruler might encounter opposition. He believed that power and violence, or righteous authority and violent force, should be used according to the presence or absence of communal support and harmony. Support and harmony meant peace and thus determined the implementation of authority.

Keywords: people, the ruler, emperor, Tang and Wu, Jie and Zhou, support, harmony

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Introduction

Jeong Yak-yong 丁若鏞 (penname Dasan: 1762–1836) is a Confucian scholar during the Joseon 朝鮮 Dynasty (1392–1910). According to his thought, the people living in a community shared equal rights without discrimination, and the chosen leader emerged to resolve conflicts among them. Thus, the people chose a reconciler who also served as leader. In the hierarchy, reconcilers chose the neighborhood chief, village chief, county head, feudal lord, and ruler. Naturally, people who chose a leader might replace him with another if he did not properly carry out his prescribed role. Consequently, the leader being replaced might think or feel that he suffered at the hands of the people. People might also consider this decision as an exercise of their rights since the chosen leader had failed to fulfill his duties and was not so much overthrown, nor even banished, as simply restored to his original position. Peace could thus be sustained so long as no conflict existed.

To date, many scholars have studied the notion of people's rights in Dasan's thought,¹ as well as the power structure in the relationships between sovereign and subjects.² However, here I will examine aspects of power and violence between the choosers (i.e. the people) and the chosen (i.e. the ruler) in Dasan's thought. The people's rights can become a form of power, a power that might turn towards violence against a ruler, or conversely, the power of the ruler might be exercised as violence toward the people. It is this dynamic of power and violence that my paper will investigate.

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1. People's rights in Dasan's thought connote modern democracy. See G. Jo (1976), whose view of Dasan is similar to that of Kim (2001) and Song (2008). Baek (2003) interpreted the people's rights in the thought of Dasan as meaning popular sovereignty in the modern democratic sense. By contrast, S. Jo (1998, 337–338) perceived Dasan as advocating a feudal system. An Byeong-jik, however, criticized Jo Seong-eul's view. An (1999, 303–304) saw Dasan's thought as involving not only democratic factors but also support for hierarchical order, and as accommodating modern democracy.
 2. Choe and Yeon (2009) studied power in the thought of Jeong Do-jeon 鄭道傳 (penname Sambong: 1342–1398)—a politician of the early Joseon Dynasty—as well as Dasan.

The Concept of Power and Violence

Power and violence are sometimes taken as relative concepts, because interpretations by the ruler and the ruled differ and are not easily understood. The power of a ruler can certainly be viewed by the ruled as oppressive, but not in all cases. Often, legitimacy is obtained by mutual agreement between the ruler and the ruled. When power is legitimate it is called “authority.” Authority is a power from which the ruler influences the ruled, but it can turn violent when abused. Violence is defined as behavior that inflicts mental or physical pain on another. Thus, the authority as lacking righteousness is not justice; if authority is deemed unjust in its application, the use of power by that authority could then appear as oppressive and unjust, despite mutual agreement and legality. Therefore, the difference between power and violence is whether or not it is rooted in legitimacy and righteousness. Righteousness can be legitimate but not always. If people suffer mentally or physically at the hands of a ruler, or if power lacks righteousness, the result could be interpreted as violence. Righteousness and legitimacy must coexist with authority to be nonviolent.³

However, power or violence does not originate solely from the ruler. The popular election or selection of a leader or a ruler is a choice made by the people, thereby creating authority or violence via selection. A ruler publicly pledges himself to do his best, and people exercise their power and take a stand by appointing and legitimizing that ruler. The choice can become violent when the power loses the ground of righteousness, though the odds of such violence arising are diminished in a peaceful and stable community. Accordingly, Dasan viewed the concept of authority as the result of people’s selection.⁴ He did not say that violence is a relative concept against authority.

3. Violence implies antisociality (e.g. dominance and one-sidedness), whereas power implies sociality and its political and legal components. Moreover, power does not require rationality but legitimacy, where violence can be legalized and further rationalized but never legitimated. Confucian moral principles, then, are a part of a structural violence that destroys equality between persons. See Bae (1987, 205–206).

4. “惟吏胥之法，既專且久，體例嫻習，舉行練熟，則雖剛明幹識之士，不能不就問焉，故權力既重，奸僞日滋，世稱吏胥之國者，誠以是也” (“Injaechaek 人才策” [Measures for Talents], in *Simunjip* 詩文集

If it were, the authority of petty officials would also reflect a propensity toward violence. Accordingly, he interpreted violence as a form of power.

Power and Violence between Feudal Lords and the Ruler

Dasan says that feudal lords choose their ruler. Accordingly, instead of using the terms sovereign and subject, he used “choosers” and “chosen.” Dasan cites the story of Tang 湯 and Jie 桀⁵ to explain the concept of power and violence between choosers and chosen. The ruler had been selected by feudal lords. These feudal lords had been chosen by county leaders, who had been selected by village leaders that had been appointed in their turn by members of five households (i.e. peoples). Thus, if the members who chose a leader are not at peace, they might also choose a new leader to support and harmonize the community. Dasan interpreted the incident as a simple change of the ruler, rather than the subject’s rebellion against his ruler in that the choosers simply replaced the original chosen one with another.

Where do rulers come from? Do they fall from the sky like rain, or well up from the ground like spring water? Five households, representing one neighborhood, choose one member to be neighborhood chief. Then five neighborhoods, which together consist of one village, choose a leader to serve as village chief. Five villages together comprise one county, with a leader serving as county head. The person chosen by county heads becomes a feudal lord and the leader chosen by feudal lords becomes ruler. If the people did not choose him, then he could not be ruler. Therefore, five family heads could meet and decide on a different neighborhood chief if they could no longer support the one in power. If the five neighborhoods could not support their village chief, then 25 families would meet and decide on a replacement. If feudal lords no longer

[Verses and Essays], vol. 8, 178c).

5. Tang (1675–1646 BC) was the first king of the Shang 商 Dynasty in Chinese history. Feudal lord Tang attacked his ruler Jie (1728–1675 BC)—the last ruler of the Xia Dynasty—and expelled him.

wanted to support their ruler, they met and elected another. Also, if five family heads could change a neighborhood chief and 25 families could replace a village chief, then why is it that when a subject change his ruler, it is called “a subject overthrowing his sovereign”?⁶

Dasan describes that Tang expels Jie in “Tangnon 湯論” (Treatise on Ideal Government),⁷ and Wu 武 conquers Zhou 紂 in “Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon 逸周書克殷篇辨” (Review of Meishi’s Annotation of Wu Conquering Zhou),⁸ a follow-up to “Tangnon,” but they both enfeoff descendants of the expelled as provincial leaders (the feudal lords of Xia 夏 and Yin 殷). Thus,

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, 故五家不協, 五家議之, 改鄰長; 五鄰不協, 二十五家議之, 改里長; 九侯八伯不協, 九侯八伯議之, 改天子. 九侯八伯之改天子, 猶五家之改鄰長, 二十五家之改里長, 誰肯曰: 臣伐君哉?” (“Tangnon 湯論,” in *Simunjip*, vol. 11, 243c). This passage written by Dasan is an interpretation of statement made by Mencius, “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” (“Lianghuiwang xia 梁惠王 下,” ch. 8, in *Mengzi* 孟子 [Mencius]). Thus, people not only toil for a sovereign but also have the right to put him on the throne and dethrone him. This is modern democracy in Dasan’s thought. Moreover, the idea of people’s rights occurred to Dasan, because grassroots democracy is only realized when people are endowed with the right to directly participate in statecraft. See G. Jo (1976, 82). By contrast, Don Baker claims that modernity is none other than representative democracy sanctioned by a constitution, gender equality, social mobility, and the transition from organic to inorganic energy, bringing about the increase in industrialization and productivity. In this vein, Baker also claims that philosophers of Practical Learning (Silhak), including Dasan in the late Joseon period, do not display the characteristics of modernity (Baker 2009, 197–198). In contrast, An Byeong-jik saw Dasan as a true heir to Confucian moral statecraft. Dasan’s thought involves not only democratic factors but also the support for a hierarchical order, but one that can accommodate modern democracy (An 1999, 303–304). Han Sang-ik claims that people’s agreement in community (i.e. Dasan’s “Tangnon”) implies the democracy of Rousseau and Locke. Further, the people’s replacement for the ruler in Dasan is a more active right than that in modern democracy. See Han (2002, 150–151). However, Lee Yong-ju viewed Dasan’s “Tangnon” not as an expression of modern democratic thought, but rather a reformation of Confucian statecraft (Lee 2013, 185–187).

7. “湯放桀可乎?” (“Tangnon,” 243c).

8. “武王知侯之戴已, 伐紂以代之, 湯武之事, 循常順古之彝典而已, 與後世弑君篡國之賊, 詎相毫髮似乎? . . . 余昔作湯論, 今又書此以續之” (“Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon,” in *Maessi seopyeong* 梅氏書平,” vol. 4, 267b).

Dasan insists that we do not call them malevolent, which one might think contradicts the idea that a subject should not stand against a ruler. When King Xuan 宣王 of Qi 齊 asked Mencius to critique the revolts of Tang and Wu against Jie and Zhou, Mencius replied that both had expelled corrupt bandits. This response showed that while King Xuan of Qi viewed Tang and Wu as unjust rebels, Mencius thought that Tang and Wu were just in expelling Jie and Zhou. Dasan took this same position. The Qin 秦 Dynasty (221–206 BC) stopped the enfeoffment of descendants of retired or expelled rulers for the first time, and this practice endured, as expelled rulers were all considered nonbenevolent. Furthermore, Dasan commented that Tang was not the first to rebel against his ruler as the rebellion originated with the Yellow Emperor. The *Shiji* 史記 (Records of the Grand Historian) recorded that subjects revolted against their sovereign. If the revolt were considered an adverse and unjust event, then Xuanyuan 軒轅 (Yellow Emperor) would also be guilty.

Was Tang's revolt and Jie's banishment righteous? Is it a justifiable punishment of rulers? The practice of subjects challenging corrupt rulers was established long ago, and Tang was not the first. At the end of the reign of Shennong 神農, feudal lords made raids on each other, so the Yellow Emperor exercised himself in the use of weapons of war to punish them. The lords all came and did homage to him. He had won three times against Shennong in the battle of Banquan 阪泉 and became ruler in place of Shennong, an incident recorded in the *Shiji* with the Yellow Emperor as a subject attacking his sovereign.⁹

Dasan criticized the debate between King Xuan of Qi and Mencius. The story of war between the Yellow Emperor and Shennong had been recorded in the *Shiji*.¹⁰ However, no direct implication can be found that the sub-

9. “湯放桀可乎？臣伐君而可乎？曰：古之道也，非湯桀爲之也。神農氏世衰，諸侯相虐，軒轅用干戈，以征不享，諸侯咸歸，以與炎帝戰於阪泉之野，三戰而得志，以代神農。見本紀則是伐君而黃帝爲之，將臣伐君而罪之，黃帝爲首惡，而湯奚問焉？” (“Tangnon,” 243c).

10. “以與炎帝戰於阪泉之野。三戰，然後得其志。蚩尤作亂，不用帝命，於是黃帝乃徵師諸侯，與蚩尤戰於涿鹿之野，遂禽殺蚩尤。而諸侯咸尊軒轅爲天子，代神農氏，是爲黃帝” (“Wudi benji 五帝本紀” [Annals of the Five Emperors], in *Shiji* 史記, 6).

ject attacked his ruler. Therefore, Dasan likely interpreted *Shiji* subjectively. Although the incident is described as Tang and Wu attacking Jie and Zhou,¹¹ the term *attack* simply means war between countries. Dasan, however, interprets this language as the power of subjects over rulers. On the other hand, when King Xuan of Qi asked Mencius about Tang and Wu, he used the word “murder” (弑) as follows:

King Xuan of Qi asked, “Was it a fact that Tang banished Jie and that King Wu punished Zhou?” Mencius replied, “It’s so in the records.” The King said, “Is it right for a minister to murder his sovereign?” Mencius said, “He who outrages humanity is a bandit. He who outrages righteousness is a ruffian. Such a person is a mere fellow. I have heard of punishing a mere fellow Zhou, but I have not heard of murdering a sovereign.”¹²

Thus, King Xuan of Qi considered the deaths of Jie and Zhou at the behest of Tang and King Wu as murder committed by subjects. Mencius, however, saw Jie and Zhou as violating the principles of humanity and righteousness, and therefore being killed by Tang and Wu. To him, Jie and Zhou were not

11. “湯自把鉞以伐昆吾，遂伐桀” (“Yin benji 殷本紀” [Annals of Yin], in *Shiji*, 31); “於是武王 . . . 甲士四萬五千人，以東伐紂” (“Zhou benji 周本紀” [Annals of Zhou], in *Shiji*, 38).

12. “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” (“Lianghuiwang xia,” ch. 8, in *Mengzi*). The passage in Mencius strongly influenced Dasan’s thinking—as shown in his writings such as “Tangnon,” “Wonmok,” and “Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon”—but Mencius did not say that people choose their ruler. This is what differentiates Dasan from Mencius. According to Mencius, a man can become a king when Heaven accepts him and thereafter the people accept him (“昔者堯薦舜於天而天受之，暴之於民而民受之” [“Wanzhang shang 萬章上,” ch. 5, in *Mengzi*]). After all, Mencius claims that Heaven sees and hears according as the people see and hear (“天視自我民視，天聽自我民聽” [“Wanzhang shang,” ch. 5, in *Mengzi*]). This view is none other than Confucian democracy, which influenced Huang Zongxi 黃宗羲 (1610–1695), a Confucian scholar in the late Ming and the early Qing Dynasty in China. Huang stated that the people are the owner of the kingdom from the beginning, and the ruler, as a guest, should govern the kingdom well for the sake of the people (“古者以天下為主，君為客，凡君之所畢世而經營者，為天下也” [Mingyi daifang lu 明夷待訪錄, bk. 1, ch. 3]). However, Huang does not say that the people choose the ruler, which also differentiates him from Dasan. Nevertheless, Mencius, Huang, and Dasan all belong to a Confucian democratic school of thought.

kings but bandits and ruffians. Mencius used the term “punishment” when Tang banished King Jie and Wu punished King Zhou. Mencius did not describe this as a revolt against rulers. King Xuan of Qi used the term “murder” to describe the death of kings at the hands of their subjects. Therefore, Dasan’s definition of “punishment” (*beol* 伐) differs from that of Mencius as well as its use in the *Shiji*. Mencius used the term in response to banishment and the punishment of corrupt rulers that imperiled righteousness and humanity. However, Dasan described the same incident as a replacement of leaders unable to provide support and harmony.¹³ Dasan thought of replaced leaders as returning to their original positions in the community. He supported this view by pointing to Tang and Wu enfeoffing descendants of Jie and Zhou as feudal lords.¹⁴ Thus, Dasan sees the conquest and expulsion by Tang and Wu not as a criminal act. In addition, he describes Tang and Wu as well versed and the Yellow Emperor as a sage.¹⁵

In the writings “Tangnon” and “Wonmok 原牧” (On the Ruler), Dasan refers to the choosers and the chosen, not subjects and kings.¹⁶ As mentioned previously, he takes as a natural right of choosers (subjects) the ability to replace incapable leaders. From Jie’s standpoint, it was violence committed by his subject; however, from Tang’s standpoint, removal of the

13. “故五家不協，五家議之，改鄰長，五鄰不協，二十五家議之，改里長，九侯八伯不協，九侯八伯議之，改天子，九侯八伯之改天子… 舞於庭者六十四人，選於中，令執羽葆，立于首以導舞者，其執羽葆者能左右之，中節則衆尊而呼之曰我舞師，其執羽葆者不能左右之中節，則衆執而下之，復于列，再選之，得能者而升之” (“Tangnon,” 243c).

14. “又其改之也，使不得爲天子而已，降而復于諸侯則許之，故唐侯曰朱，虞侯曰商均，夏侯曰杞子，殷侯曰宋公” (“Tangnon,” 243c).

15. “武王湯黃帝之等，王之明帝之聖者也” (“Tangnon,” 243c).

16. Further, Mencius does not describe the relationship as that between king and subject, but as those that hurt outrage humanity and righteousness and those who punish and behead them (“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” [“Lianghuiwang xia,” ch. 8, in *Mengzi*]). According to Mencius, Tang and Wu beheading Jie and Zhou was the execution of righteous power. By contrast, King Xuan of Qi describes their relationship as that between king and subject (“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？” [“Lianghuiwang xia,” ch. 8, in *Mengzi*]). In his view, Jie and Zhou as kings suffered violence at the hands of Tang and Wu.

chosen was an execution of authorized rights assigned to the chooser. Dasan conceptualizes violence in this context: Tang was not a chooser that allowed Jie to be the chosen, and the ancestor of Jie was a ruler selected by the choosers. It was Dasan's idea that Jie should have played his role faithfully by bearing in his mind that his forefather was selected by the choosers. Yu 禹, the ancestor of Jie, succeeded in preventing floods and providing irrigation for the people, and his throne was transferred peacefully from Shun 舜. However, Dasan considered Yu as selected by the choosers

Dasan justified King Wu's expulsion of Jie from a new interpretation of Confucius's evaluation of the music of King Wu, where he commented that the music was very beautiful but not very good. In contrast, he commented that the Shao music 韶樂 of King Shun was both very beautiful and good.

The Master says of the Shao music that it was perfectly beautiful and also perfectly good. He said of the Wu music that it was perfectly beautiful but not perfectly good.¹⁷

Zhu Xi interpreted the difference in appreciation to imply a difference in transfer of the throne, as it occurred peacefully for King Shun and King Yao but was obtained by conquest in the case of King Wu.¹⁸ Cheng brothers—Cheng Yi 程頤 (1033–1107) and Cheng Hao 程顥 (1032–1085), Confucian scholars in the Northern Song 宋 Dynasty (960–1127)—interpreted the comments the same way.¹⁹ Kong Anguo 孔安國, a Confucian scholar in the Former Han 漢 Dynasty (206 BC–AD 8) and Xing Bing 邢昺 (932–1010), a Confucian scholar of the Northern Song Dynasty, also shared the same opinion.²⁰ Among interpretations, Mencius sees the incidents from a dif-

17. “子謂韶，盡美矣，又盡善也；謂武，盡美矣，未盡善也” (*Lunyu* 論語 [Analects of Confucius], bk. 3, ch. 25).

18. “美者，聲容之盛。善者，美之實也。舜紹堯致治，武王伐紂救民，其功一也，故其樂皆盡美。然舜之德，性之也，又以揖遜而有天下；武王之德，反之也，又以征誅而得天下，故其實有不同者” (*Lunyu jizhu* 論語集註 [Collected Annotations on the Analects of Confucius], bk. 3, ch. 25).

19. “程子曰：成湯放桀，惟有吳德，武王亦然，故未盡善。堯舜禹湯武，其揆一也。征伐非其所欲，所遇之時然爾” (*Lunyu jizhu*, bk. 3, ch. 25).

20. “孔曰：舜聖德受禪，故盡善，武王以征伐取天下，故未盡善。邢云以臣伐，雖曰應天順人，不若揖讓而受，故未盡善” (*Noneo gogejumju* 論語古今註 [Ancient and Contemporary Commentaries on

ferent point of view. He considers the conquest and expulsion by Tang and Wu as humane and righteous, because in doing so, they implemented the good while Confucius commented that the music of Wu was very beautiful but not good. However, Mencius did not comment on the interpretation of music by Confucius. Dasan, on the other hand, countered the interpretations by Kong Anguo and Xing Bing by insisting that they were wrong, stating that Wu would be bad and guilty in their interpretation since the good and the bad are relative concepts.²¹ Furthermore, such an interpretation may wrongly apply to the relationship between King Wen 文王 and Duke of Zhou 周公. King Wen initiated extensive works that established the Zhou Dynasty, and Duke of Zhou has completed them.²² Dasan said that Confucius respected King Wen, Duke of Zhou, and King Wu equally and criticized post-Confucian scholars for disparaging Wu and Tang. Confucius was therefore never disappointed with King Wen and Duke of Zhou, and this understanding is well known.

Everyone was already deeply respectful to both King Wen and Duke of Zhou, and King Wu would be chagrined if Confucius finds something disgraced only from King Wu alone. In the *Chunqiu Zuo zhuan* 春秋左傳, there is a paragraph that recorded the comments from Jizi 季子 regarding his appreciation of Shaohu 韶濩 music. He commented, “even though, there is something ashamed of virtue instead.” Old Confucian scholars stuck to these comments and finally said, “the revolt conducted by Tang and Wu can be reconsidered upon their faults.”²³

the *Analects of Confucius*], bk. 2, 186c).

21. “駁曰：非也，若如孔說，是讀之爲善惡之善也，夫善與惡對，未盡善則歸於惡而已，善之與惡，如陰陽黑白，非陽則陰，非白則黑，陰陽之間，無非陰非陽之物，黑白之間，無非白非黑之色，既未盡善，明有一分惡根未及盡去者也” (*Noneo gogumju*, 186c).
22. “況湯武之事，不是小節，善則爲大善，惡則爲大惡，居大善而帶小惡，無是理也，若帶小惡，明非聖人，若非聖人，必歸大惡，烏可模糊言之，不惟武王爲然，起此事者文王也，成此業者周公也，若云武王有未盡善，此罪此案，武王無獨當之理，竝文王周公皆未盡善” (*Noneo gogumju*, 186c).
23. “孔子於文王周公，必無絲毫不滿，尺童之所知也。既於文王周公，心服其聖，獨於武王。常有一膜，武王不寬乎？左傳稱季子觀樂，襄二十九年見舞韶濩者曰：惟有慙德，涓湯樂先儒執此一語，遂謂湯武之事，原可訾議” (*Noneo gogumju*, 186c).

For this reason, Dasan interprets the comments of Confucius on Wu music as limited to the music itself, and the target of his appreciation, or lack thereof, should not be extended to a person but rather only concerns musical differences. Shao music consisted of nine musical scales requiring more effort to play in comparison to Wu with its six musical scales. Therefore, the comments describe an appreciation of musical performances revealed by differences separate from comparing the two men's personalities.²⁴ From this standpoint, Mencius and Confucius may have shared the same opinion about King Wu, but Dasan did not comment on the differences or similarities of their opinions.

According to interpretations from Cheng Zhu 程朱, Kong Anguo, and Xing Bing, the music of Wu was not very good because he became king by force. However, in Wu's view, Wu might have insisted that he mobilized just forces against Zhou, the tyrant. On the other hand, in Zhou's view, Zhou might have fought that the revolt of his subject was violence, the other form of power. On the other hand, Dasan sees a difference in the two appreciations as if they were musical differences.

In contrast, there was a subject that revolted against his king but ended by being killed by him. Guanshu 管叔, a subject and uncle of King Cheng's 成王, planned a revolt with his brothers Caishu 蔡叔 and Huoshu 霍叔, mobilizing forces with the promise of putting Wu Geng 武庚, the son of King Zhou, on the throne. He was defeated by Duke of Zhou, who served King Cheng as a regent, and was sentenced to death.²⁵ Dasan comments that Duke of Zhou putting Guanshu to death as punishment for treason was official and righteous, as it ensured peace in the kingdom. He compared this incident with Duke Huan of Qi 齊桓公, who killed his elder brother to stabi-

24. “總之孔子論樂，未嘗論人，論韶武，未嘗論舜武，善與未善，亦惟聲容是評耳。功多者其樂九成，若九淵九韶之類是也。功未多者，其樂六成，若六英大武之類是也，孔子謂未盡善，非以是乎？”(Noneo gogeeum-ju, 186c).

25. “管叔，名鮮，武王弟，周公兄也。武王勝商殺紂，立紂子武庚，而使管叔與弟蔡叔口 霍叔監其國。武王崩，成王幼，周公攝政。管叔與武庚畔，周公討而誅之…曰：使管叔監殷，管叔以殷畔也，有諸？曰：然。曰：周公知其將畔而使之與？曰：不知也。然則聖人且有過與？曰：周公，弟也；管叔，兄也。周公之過，不亦宜乎？○言周公乃管叔之弟，管叔乃周公之兄，然則周公不知管叔之將畔而使之，其過有所不免矣”(Mengzi jizhu 孟子集註 [Collected Annotations on the Mencius], bk. 4, ch. 9).

lize the country after an unofficial revolt. Dasan says that Duke Huan of Qi killed his elder brother to grab power, but Duke of Zhou killed his elder brother to ensure stability for the entire kingdom and the people. Thus, the former revolt is unofficial and private while the latter is official and righteous, and a remarkable contrast exists in the appreciation of the two incidents. However, Confucius commented that Duke Huan of Qi was an honest and just man: “Contrary to other families, there was a strict way in the royal family of committing righteous decisions.”²⁶

According to Dasan, the capital punishment for Guanshu was an authorized execution of righteous authority, while his revolt was an act of violence done against the king. It was violence or a violent use of power. Duke of Zhou served his regency and killed his elder brother Guanshu on behalf of the king for the good of the kingdom and its people. If Guanshu intended to bring peace to the people by crowning Wu Geng, the son of King Zhou, it would also be considered a righteous authorized practice in response to violent acts by Duke of Zhou. However, Dasan says that such violence can only be righteous if its purpose is to bring peace to the people: people can choose a leader who brings harmony amongst people, and can replace him if he brings disharmony. In this case, harmony means peace.

Power and Violence between the People and the Ruler

Dasan assumed a change of leaders decided upon by the people to be an authorized practice, for the leaders were initially chosen by the people and were entrusted with the role to resolve troubles among the people. That is, the people (the choosers) selected the ruler (the chosen), and the chosen one should make laws for the people’s welfare.²⁷ People choose a man com-

26. “齊桓公殺兄以定國，周公殺兄以定天下，彼私此公，雖若霄壤，孔子謂桓公正而不誦，帝王家有義斷之法，與私家不同” (*Maengja youi* 孟子要義 [Essential Meanings in the *Book of Mencius*], bk. 2, 111a).

27. “里正從民望而制之法，上之黨正，黨正從民望而制之法，上之州長，州上之國君，國君上之皇王，故其法皆便民” (“*Wonmok*,” in *Simunjip*, vol. 10, 213d).

petent in public affairs to resolve disputes arising amongst them, a fair and intelligent man as the leader of their towns, and a wise and virtuous man as the leader of each province.²⁸ By following this process, a ruler was eventually created.²⁹

While 64 dancers were dancing in the yard, one man was appointed to lead the dancing by taking the gait at the forefront. If he conducts group dancing in harmony with the rhythms of the music, then they would praise him, “You are our great dance leader!” However, if he failed to lead the dancing harmoniously, dancers would return him to his original position and find another “great dance leader.” It is the dancers who decide the dance leader position, and it is the same dancers who choose a new dance leader. Would it be reasonable to blame the people who chose the leaders?³⁰

From this perspective, according to Dasan, King Wu, chosen by the people, founded the Zhou Dynasty, but the kingdom had been destroyed Emperor Qin Shi Huang 秦始皇 (259–210 BC). The descendants of the king of the Zhou Dynasty that perished under Emperor Qin Shi Huang may have experienced violence because they were not enfeoffed. Replacing a ruler could also be considered violent if the leader had been capable of bringing harmony and support to the people. Therefore, the yardstick for measuring whether power is righteous or violent had to be the existence of peace in the community. Accordingly, people in the community determined the nature of power to be righteous or violent. For example, during the reign of King Wu, there was turmoil in the territory of the Yin Dynasty, and the people were not at peace.

28. “邃古之初，民而已，豈有牧哉？民于于然聚居，有一夫與鄰闢莫之決，有叟焉善爲公言，就而正之，四鄰咸服，推而共尊之，名曰里正” (“Wonmok,” 213d).

29. “四鄰咸服，推而共尊之，名曰里正。於是數里之民，以其里闢莫之決，有叟焉賢而多識，就而正之，數里咸服，推而共尊之，名曰黨正。數黨之民，以其黨闢莫之決，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，名之曰帝王” (“Wonmok,” 213d).

30. “舞於庭者六十四人，選於中，令執羽葆，立于首以導舞者，其執羽葆者能左右之，中節則衆尊而呼之曰我舞師，其執羽葆者不能左右之中節，則衆執而下之，復于列，再選之，得能者而升之，尊而呼之曰我舞師，其執而下之者衆也，而升而尊之者亦衆也” (“Tangnon,” 243c).

As evidence, Dasan saw that the music of King Wu did not bring calm to his country because it changed contemporary customs or orders:

The Baogui 寶龜 writes that “there is great turmoil in the western province, where people of the destroyed Yin Dynasty live, conquered by King Wu. What is the same between the period of King Wu and the reign of King Shun, who administrated his country by following his intention? Thus, the music of King Wu, invented by Duke of Zhou, could not effect a change in customs and orders of the country. Even in the age of sages, King Wu and Duke of Zhou, it was beyond their capacity.”³¹

Therefore, Dasan interpreted the destruction of King Zhou of the Yin Dynasty and the foundation of the Zhou Dynasty as a nonviolent and valid execution of righteous power by subjects. However, the new country was not completely peaceful. There was turmoil for the people of the destroyed Yin Dynasty but none under the reign of King Shun. Yet, Dasan described the reign of King Wu and Duke of Zhou as the age of sages, even though they were unable to bring peace to all the people. He also described the people of the destroyed Yin Dynasty as obstinate men since he viewed them as not completely obedient to King Wu. Dasan’s point of view was in all likelihood that these disobedient and obstinate people prevented King Wu and Duke of Zhou from bringing peace and harmony to the kingdom. Thus, these people committed violence toward King Wu and Duke of Zhou. However, speaking for the people of the destroyed Yin Dynasty, King Wu was violent and unfair. To the people, the revolt was a righteous execution of their rights and power.

Nevertheless, in the previous passages from “Tangnon,” “Wonmok,” and “Iljuseo geugeun pyeonbyeon,” no mention of the people being able to directly change their ruler can be found. These writings indicate that the people can change the leaders they have chosen, and the ruler can be changed by leaders that chose him. The ruler indirectly governs the people

31. “寶龜之命曰：有大艱于西土，殷之頑民，迪屢不靜，視舜之從欲以治，何如哉？故大武之樂，雖作於周公，而未至於世變風移之日，聖人之時也。非人力之所能爲矣” (*Noneo gogumju*, 186c).

through officials, not directly rules over them. If the ruler directly governs the people, then Dasan might say that the people should be able to change the ruler. From this point of view, such choice is the legitimate right and power of the people.

Consequently, that he, together with King Jeongjo 正祖, advocated strong sovereign power centered on the king is remarkable.³² This dedication to a strong sovereign is particularly observable in the policy of the well-field (*jeongjeon* 井田) system in his *Gyeongse yupyo* 經世遺表 (Design for Good Government) since the ruler is supposed to nationalize land and distribute it equally to peasants, which is only possible when the king exercises strong, centralized sovereign power.³³ In Dasan's time, most land was under private possession and the king, if he was to reform it, would need to wield such centralized power.³⁴ Thus, we can surmise that he did not claim that replacement of a ruler by the people was justified.³⁵ After all, he

32. Dasan's advocacy of strong sovereign power centering on the king was influenced by King Jeongjo's claim of Supreme Principles (*hwanggeuk* 皇極) of statecraft, which was about to be brought into practice, having been supported by the Southerners (Namin 南人) faction. In other words, Dasan and King Jeongjo were of the same mind concerning the direction of the royal regime. However, Dasan also occasionally criticized King Jeongjo for the prevalence of petty officials (*chogye munsin* 抄啓文臣), and the non-enforcement of the well-field system. See Bak (2003, 14–26). Dasan seems to contradict himself, because he advocates for both the ruler's strong authority as well as the people choosing their ruler. Therefore, we would have to say that his thought changes. Bak Hyeon-mo, however, claims that his thought does not change but is logically consistent throughout (2003, 9). His view is similar to those of Im (1990, 78) and An (1999, 280).

33. See S. Jo (1998, 100).

34. Dasan advocates a feudal system with the sovereign king at the center and also accepts a hereditary social hierarchy (Yamaguchi 2000, 299–309). In contrast, Han Sang-ik viewed Dasan as aiming for an egalitarian society that was commensurate with one's ability and position (Han 2002, 138–139).

35. Some researchers claim that Dasan's statecraft connotes a democratic revolution and is based on popular insurrection. For this, see G. Jo (1976, 81–118). An Byeong-jik, on the other hand, repudiates this position, claiming Dasan aimed for reform through strengthening royal authority. An argues that Dasan sympathized with the notion of popular insurrection but was also hostile to it in that it could destroy the dynasty. He composed a draft of censure, also known as *Jeollado changuimun* 全羅道倡義文, against the revolt of Hong Gyeong-nae in 1811. And in the following year, Dasan composed *Minboui* 民堡議, a countermeasure against the revolt. See An (1999, 297).

thought that the people do not become happy when they replace the ruler but do become happy when the ruler reforms the status quo. However, not all people benefit from such reforms by the ruler. Some people would benefit while others would not, and could even possibly be harmed. For those who benefitted, the ruler exercised his power justly, but to those who did not, the ruler abused his power. Therefore, for the former, the ruler exhibited righteous power, but for the latter he carried out unjust violence.

Conclusion

Jeong Yak-yong describes the relationship between subject and ruler, between the people and their leaders, as that between choosers and the chosen. Selecting the chosen leader is the right of the people, similar to a modern democratic election in which citizens select a preferable candidate as leader. Such decision illustrates the autonomy of a country when a leader is chosen by the majority of its people. Thus, we can verify this thought by reviewing comments by Dasan such as, “Heaven has already endowed Man with autonomy to choose the good or the bad.”³⁶ The people’s right to choose leaders was based on this autonomy, the main idea characterizing his statecraft, and a connotation of modernity.³⁷ A leader replaced by the

36. This position was influenced by Ricci’s *Tianzhu shiyi*: “天主賦人此性，能行二者，所以厚人類也，其能取捨此善，非但增爲善之功，于俾其功爲我功焉，故曰：天主所以生我，非用我，所以善我，乃用我此之謂也” (Ricci 1923, 118). The *Tianzhu shiyi* is a Catholic catechism that Matteo Ricci composed in which he makes a Thomistic emendation to Confucianism. Thomas Aquinas applied Aristotelian rationalism to Catholic theology and thereby drew his own theology of free will. Dasan, in turn, applied Thomism to Confucianism and established Silhak (Practical Learning). Therefore, his philosophy of Silhak comprises Thomism and Aristotelianism. See Baker (2002, 62–68). For Dasan, the human being’s moral sense or inclination towards ethical virtue is not the result of socialization or nurture, but rather an innate mechanism or trait (Chung 2013, 120).

37. Kim Il-sung applauded Dasan’s political thought in a speech on Juche philosophy in 1955, and Dasan’s thought became popular in North Korea in the 1960s. Kim Jong-il also supported Dasan’s thought. David-West notes the striking similarities between Kim Il-sung’s Juche concept and Dasan’s concept of man (2011, 93–104).

people would return to his original position and not lose anything further. From the standpoint of the replaced leader, such a replacement might be viewed a violent act. However, the choice would be a valid and legitimate right if such power was employed righteously. Therefore, Tang and Wu were right to expel Jie and Zhou.

In contrast, Emperor Qin Shi Huang destroyed the Zhou Dynasty but did not enfeoff the descendants of the previous king with appropriate positions and was not chosen by the people. Since he used violent force, his behavior was neither right nor just.

As for the people, Dasan's thinking has its limitations. He considered the revolt by the people of the Yin Dynasty to be violent and considered King Wu a sage. Following his idea concerning the generalized process of selecting leaders or rulers, the revolt by the people of the Yin Dynasty was a valid execution of their rights and power; nonetheless, Dasan considered this revolt a violent act opposing the authority of a sage, King Wu. Thus, Dasan did not always view incidents from the standpoint of the people alone. However, from the perspective of the people of the destroyed Yin Dynasty, King Wu was violent. Accordingly, the people's protest was a righteous execution of rights and power despite Dasan's divergence.

Dasan thought that the ultimate purpose of power entrusted to chosen rulers was to support and harmonize the people toward a peaceful community. Thus, the people should choose a man capable of fulfilling these duties and replace "the chosen" if he could not. The right of the people is to choose and replace their leaders, though such replaced leaders might suffer violence in the process.

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