Chŏng Yagyong’s Political Philosophy:
Kyŏngse Yup’yo and Mongmin Simsŏ’s Arguments on State Governance*

Min-jeong BAEK**
Department of Philosophy, Catholic University, Korea

Young-ho LEE***
Academy of East Asian Studies, Sungkyunkwan University, Korea

ABSTRACT

This article analyzes Chŏng Yagyong’s political philosophy, especially his discussion on his ideal for righteous governance (wangjong 王政). Chŏng proposed new discourses on human nature and active governance in order to realize his ideal of wangjong. He further suggested an integration of the central and local governing systems. In this integrated system, magistrates would have the duty to educate their people and solve economic problems. Chŏng Yagyong’s theory on governance by pyŏndang (辨别, discriminating between different social status groups), underlining the strict hierarchy of social status and a hierarchical social order, emerged in the process of explicating this system. He believed that the state’s governing system could be maintained only when status hierarchy was carefully observed and respected, as in the difference between teacher and student, and officials and the people, and in accordance with individual capability and moral self-cultivation. He also suggested a precise bureaucratic system in order to avoid private abuse of power by both the king and officialdom. Although the high level of centralization of power in his proposed system is controversial, it seems that his argument is still relevant today since he emphasized that, through the “royal way” and wangjong, the state could be governed in accordance with the highest standards of fairness.

Keywords: wangjong, Tasan Chŏng Yagyong, discourse on human nature, active governance, pyŏndang, bureaucratic system

Introduction: Chosŏn Sinocentrism and the Wangjong Ideology

This article analyzes Chŏng Yagyong’s (1762-1836) political philosophy, especially his ideas on righteous governance (wangjong 王政, literally “royal governance”). Before we analyze Chŏng Yagyong’s own political thought, however, we need to examine how Chosŏn intellectuals generally understood wangjong.

The term wangjong refers to a political system of “benevolent governance” or “rule of virtue (or rites)” that is ever-present in the ancient Chinese Confucian Classics. The king in this phrase is an ideal ruler who follows the “royal way.” In a sense, the king is the embodiment of civilization itself.¹ From early in the Chosŏn dynasty, Korea also formally adhered to an ideology of wangjong aimed at righteous governance, though there were shifts in what wangjong was supposed to mean. This article focuses on the seventeenth century and beyond, because in the historical circumstances of having to reconstruct Chosŏn society from the great damage inflicted by the Japanese and Manchu invasions at the end of the
sixteenth and in the first half of the seventeenth centuries, two debates related to wangjöng, the discourse on honoring the King (chonwangnon 尊王論) and the discourse on actualizing righteous governance (haengwangnon 行王論), gained a new significance.²

Song Siyol (1607-1689) once said that Confucius’s intention in writing The Spring and Autumn Annals (Chunqiu 春秋) was “to revere the king and expel the barbarians” (chonwang yangi 尊王攘夷). In this context, “to revere the king” means to revere Sinitic civilization. Song Siyol regarded Chosön during and after the Manchu Invasion of 1636 as equivalent to China during the Southern Song dynasty, and advocated a military campaign against the newly established Qing (pukpôl 北伐, the Northern Expedition) based on the distinction between “those who are civilized (those who, like the Koreans, possessed Sinitic civilization) and the barbarians” (hwairon 華夷論). Thus the “Sinocentrism” of Zhu Xi’s Chunqiu yili (春秋義理, The Principles in The Spring and Autumn Annals) in seventeenth-century Korea acquired a new meaning.³ It came to stand for the So-Chunghwa (小中華, Little Chunchhwa) ideology. The term “Little Chunchhwa” (literally “Little China”) in the view of Chosön intellectuals encompassed the meaning that after the collapse of the Ming dynasty Chosön rather than China was the only entity that was capable of realizing Chunchhwa, which here should be understood as Sinitic civilization. They used the word “little” to express the fact that the territory of Chosön was smaller than that of China, not because they thought that the civilization of Chosön was inferior to that of China. When, after the death of King Hyojong, the plan of a campaign against the Qing was frustrated, Song Siyol propounded the ideology of “revering the Zhou dynasty and the Ming dynasty” (chonju taemyöng 尊周大明).⁴ The slogan of “revering the Zhou dynasty and the Ming dynasty” was

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** First Author.

*** Corresponding Author.

¹ The reason that Confucian intellectuals called ideal, righteous governance “wangjöng” (王政) and the ideal standard of governance “wangle” (王法), using the term “wang” (王), is because Confucian society was essentially a monarchical society. Although Confucian intellectuals could not ignore hereditary succession or monarchism, they expected the monarch to practice righteous governance and to adhere to the most righteous principles and standards in order to control abuses of the monarch’s power and to ensure righteous politics.

² Baek Min-Jeong (Paek Minjong) has provided a comprehensive introduction to the discourse of wangjöng of Chosön intellectuals in “Chosön chisigun ù wangjöngnon kwa chongch’iök konggongsöng” (Chosön intellectuals’ discourse on wangjöng (王政) and the nature of the political community) Tongjông hakchi 164. Since Tasan’s discourse on wangjöng was introduced only briefly in that article, in this paper we intend to more thoroughly discuss his discourse on wangjöng in Kyôngye yup’yö and Mongmin sinso.

³ See “Ch’ôngi Hyojong, Taewangmyo wi sessilô” (請以孝宗大王廟為世室疏), in Songja taejôn (末子大全, Complete works of Song Siyol), vol. 17, “Myoji” (墓誌), in Songja taejôn sol sāhyu (末子大全續拓遺, Supplement to the sequel to the complete works of Song Siyol), vol. 2.

⁴ In the mid to late 17th century, the Northern Expedition plan of King Hyojong and the Ritual Controversy that unfolded after his death changed the Chosön intellectuals’ view of China and their position on its political legitimacy. On Chosön’s political situation at that time and how Chosön Confucian intellectuals established their identity by claiming a different method of distinguishing Chunghwa (中華) from iök (夷狄), or in other words, civilization from barbarism, see Jahlyun Kim Haboush, “Constructing the Center: The Ritual
another way to express “revering Sinitic civilization and expelling the barbarians.” The emphasis on China’s Zhou and Ming dynasties in Song’s writings actually meant reverence for a universal notion of wangjōng aimed at righteous governance rather than reverence for a specific dynasty, and therefore it is better interpreted as “revering the king” (the symbol of Sinitic civilization, who may be regarded as the embodiment of wangjōng). In fact, Song Siyŏl usually employed the two terms “revering the Zhou dynasty” and “revering the king” interchangeably.³

According to Chosŏn’s Confucian intellectuals throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the realization of “Sinitic civilization” and inheritance of the Way (to/ldao 道) essentially depended on whether benevolent governance was accomplished in the here and now. One can catch this point just by reading Yi Yulgok’s “Sŏnggyŏn tot’ŏng” (圣賢道統, Transmission of the Way among the Sages and Worthies) in his Sŏnghak chibyo (聖學輯要, Summary of the Sages’ Teachings). Yulgok argues that tot’ŏng (the practice of passing on the way among the sages and worthies), was established during the era of Yao and Shun and the Three Dynasties (Xia, Shang, and Zhou), and especially during the Zhou dynasty, when the sage king became the monarch and the teacher of people, implementing ideal governance. But once the royal succession became based on heredity rather than knowledge of Confucian Truth, the right to lay claim to the Way was passed on to Confucian intellectuals.⁶ When Yulgok submitted Sŏnghak chibyo to King Sŏnjo, he urged the King to revive Yao and Shun’s teachings and governance and assume direct responsibility for passing on the truth of Confucian orthodoxy.⁷ Through the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries, Chosŏn intellectuals’ thought of the “inheritance of tot’ŏng” as the fulfillment of Yao and Shun’s policies (righteous governance) or wangjōng, which in turn was regarded as the very core of Sinitic civilization.

Recently, Kim Yongmin has reviewed the meaning of the concept “Chunghwa.”⁸ After comparing the view of Kye Sŭngbŏm,⁹ who criticizes Chosŏn’s


⁵ “Ch’ŏngch’usang hwihŏ t’aemyoșo” (請追上徽號於太廟疏), in Songja taejon, vol. 18, “Kisul chammok” (記述雜錄), Songja taejon, vol. 19.

⁶ Here tot’ŏng is translated as “the transmission of the Way.” To be more precise, it means to pass down what was regarded as the ultimate truth in Confucianism to the legitimately acknowledged next generation. On how political and academic legitimacy was established in the sixteenth century by Taegeye Yi Hwang and the meaning of tot’ŏng for Chosŏn intellectuals, see Martina Deuchler, “Reject the False and Uphold the Straight: Attitudes Toward Heterodox Thought in Early Yi Korea,” in The Rise of Neo-Confucianism in Korea, edited by Theodore de Bary and JaHyun Kim Haboush. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

⁷ “Sŏnghak chibyo” (聖學輯要, Summary of the sages’ teachings), and “Sŏnggyŏn tot’ŏng” (聖賢道統), in Yulgok Sŏnsaeng chŏnso (栗谷先生全書, Complete collection of Yulgok’s works), vol. 26.

⁸ Kim Yongmin, “Chosŏn Chunghwajuui úi chackŏmt’ŏ irŏnjŏk chŏpkŭn” (A reexamination of Chosŏn’s Sinocentrism: a theoretical approach), Han’goksu yŏng’gu 162 (2013).

mentality of regarding itself as a “Little Chunghwa” as a posture of excessive submissiveness toward a specific Chinese dynasty or Chinese culture, with that of U Kyongsop who sees the mentality of So-Chunghwa as an autonomous effort by Choson intellectuals to actualize the common values of Confucian civilization, Kim Yongmin argues that the meaning of Chunghwa is different from both of these assertions. He claims that Chunghwa is neither a concept based on Chinese ethnicity or regionality, as Kye Sungbom has argued, nor something that refers to the high-level core values or essence of Confucianism, the common civilization in East Asia, as U Kyongsop had asserted. Kim Yongmin contends that the concept of “Chunghwa” was instead a kind of empty signifier which was typically found in connection with the transmission of legitimacy. He argues that when the Ming dynasty disappeared, the term Chunghwa became an open concept which, without concrete essence or content, could be interpreted and utilized in multifarious ways.

We agree with Kim Yongmin’s argument that Chunghwa is a kind of fiction useful for claiming legitimacy rather than a reference to a specific dynasty or cultural phenomenon. However, for Confucian intellectuals, the genealogy of the Way was eventually directed at “political” legitimacy, and was a natural result of their belief in pursuing ideal governance (wangjong) through cultivating one’s character and governing others (修己治人). Therefore it is more fitting to say that what the Confucian intellectuals sought to understand in various ways was the essence of how Yao and Shun governed, in other words, wangjong, the goal of tohak (道學), rather than the Chunghwa concept itself. The apparent Sinocentrism upheld by Choson’s intellectuals with slogans such as “chonju taemyo” and “chonwang yangi” was an embodiment of their political orientation toward wangjong and, moreover, an expression of the belief that Choson was capable of guaranteeing its legitimacy under the original principles of wangjong.

Actually the interest in wangjong of the Yao and Shun era and the Three dynasties is revealed explicitly in Choson kyonggukchon (朝鮮經國典, Handbook on Statecraft for Choson) by Chong Tojon (1342-1398), the man who is regarded as the architect of the newly founded Choson dynasty. In his explanation of the origins of the state appellation “Choson,” Chong Tojon emphasized its relationship with Kija’s (箕子) Choson (Kija = Jizi in Chinese). Kija was said to have passed Hongfan Jiuchou (洪範九疇, The Great Plan Composed of Nine Divisions) on

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10 U Kyongsop, “Choson Chunghwajutii e taejan haksolsajok komyo” (Review of Choson’s Sinocentrism from the perspective of intellectual history), Han’guksa yongyu 159 (2012): 253-59.


12 Kim Yongmin argues that Choson’s intellectuals reinterpreted and utilized the concept of “Chunghwa” across different fields like rites and ceremonies, academics, and politics in order to prove their legitimacy. He refers to two works which are useful introductions to these issues: Cho Sungsan, “18 segi huban-19 segi chonhan taecheng insik u pyonhwa wa saeroun Chunghwa kwannym u hyongjong” (Changes in perceptions toward the Qing dynasty and the formation of a new Chunghwa conception through the second half of the 18th century and the first half of the 19th century), Han’guksa yongyu 145 (2009); Ho Taeong, “Choson huj Chunghwaron kwa yonga insik” (Discourse on Chunghwa and perceptions of history in the late Choson) (Seoul: Acanet Press, 2009).
to King Wu of the Zhou dynasty. By underlining Hongfan, which was said to have been taught to King Wu by Kija/Jizi, and the p’alchogyo (八條教, the eight articles of moral teachings) which were said to have been developed on the basis of Hongfan, he contended that “benevolent governance” (wangjong) was first carried out in the East (that is, Chosŏn). Chŏng Tojŏn suggested that Chosŏn at this time inherited the ideology of Kija Chosŏn and practiced wangjong in a matter similar to that of China’s Zhou Dynasty. This sort of belief was continued intact by Yi Yulgok and Song Siyŏl. In Tongho mundap (東湖問答, Questions and Answers in the Tongho Studio), Yulgok said that tohak in the East was derived directly from Kija’s ideal governance, and that the essence of it included chŏngjŏnje (井田制, the nine-square-field system) and the p’alchogyo. He even wrote Kija silgi (箕子實記, True Records of Kija), in which he argued that not only had Kija Chosŏn rivaled the Zhou dynasty, but also that Chosŏn was more advanced than China in terms of ideal governance. Song Siyŏl also spoke highly of Korea’s successful avoidance of pollution by the barbarians and the maintenance of Chinese civilization ever since Kija Chosŏn. Thus, when we consider the belief that Korean intellectuals held that the politics (in the form of Hongfan Jichou) of the Zhou dynasty went back to Kija, the slogan of the advocates of Sinocentrism in Chosŏn, “revere the Zhou dynasty” (chonju 尊周), could be interpreted as “chon Kija Chosŏn” (尊箕子朝鮮, to revere Kija Chosŏn).

After the end of the wars with Japan and the Manchus, in the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, some subtle differences appeared in the wangjong ideology. While, in the middle and late seventeenth century, during the lifetime of Song Siyŏl, chonjuron (尊周論, Discourse on Revering the Zhou Dynasty) and chonwangnon (尊王論, Discourse on Revering the King) were still interchangeable, during the reign of King Yongjo (r. 1724-1776) a distinction in meaning began to appear between the two terms. King Yongjo first published Ŭje sanghun (御製常訓, Constant Teachings by the King) in 1745, to be given to Crown Prince Sado, and published as Ŭje sok sanghun (御製續常訓, Sequel to the Constant Teachings by the King) in 1758. The alteration of the expression chonju chisŏng (尊王之誠, faithfulness in revering the Zhou dynasty) in the first edition into chonwang chisŏng (尊王之誠, faithfulness in revering the king) in the second book triggered the fierce opposition of young Confucian scholars. These young scholars, located throughout the central and local official schools and academies,

13 Martina Deuchler, The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 107-08. Deuchler states that to Chŏng Tojŏn the establishment of the Chosŏn Dynasty meant the restoration of the ideology of Kija Chosŏn. Kija was regarded as the figure who provided the prototype of wangjong to Chosŏn’s Confucian intellectuals.

14 “Kukho” (國號), and “Konggŏ” (政號). Chosŏn kyōnggukch’ŏn (朝鮮經國典, Handbook on statecraft for Chosŏn), kwŏn 1; “Ŭje” (御制), Chosŏn Kyōnggukch’ŏn, kwŏn 2, in Sambongjip (三峰集, Collection of Sambong’s works), vol. 13.

15 Tongho mundap (東湖問答), in Yulgok Sŏnsaeng chŏnhsŏ, vol. 15.


17 “Chinsudang chuch’a” (進修堂奏簡), in Songja taejŏn, vol. 16.
joined together to petition the King to change the wording back to *chonju* because “*chonwang*” was an irreverent expression arrogating the title of Wang (王, the King). Differentiation had appeared between the two once-interchangeable terms *chonwang* and *chonju*.

This phenomenon became more noticeable during King Chŏngjo’s reign. King Chŏngjo rebuilt the Taebodan (大報壇, Altar of Great Gratitude) where memorial rituals to the emperors of the former Ming dynasty were performed, and also considered himself as the true successor of the Ming dynasty. Moreover he compiled *Chonju hwip’yŏn* (尊周彙編, Collection of Cases of Revering the Zhou Dynasty), emphasizing that the East (Chosŏn) was the bearer of traditional Chinese rituals and institutions, worshiping the spirits of the emperors and perpetuating the bright moon of the Ming dynasty. Yet if we examine “*Maengja kangŭi*” (孟子講義, Lectures on Mencius) and “*Maengja ch’aengmun*” (孟子策問, Questions and Answers on *Mencius*) in *Kyŏngsa kangŭi* (經史講義, Lectures on Chinese Confucian Classics and Histories) a collection of lectures presented during King Chŏngjo’s reign, we see that this was not a form of blind worship of everything Chinese, a fact that becomes apparent in the argument that Mencius did not revere the Zhou dynasty (*Maengja pul chonju* 孟子不尊周).19 King Chŏngjo and the scholar officials who participated in the lectures on the *Mencius* conducted heated debates on why Mencius did not revere the Zhou dynasty and instead tried to persuade the feudal states to actualize ideal governance themselves.20 At the end of the discussions, the authors came to the conclusion that both Confucius and Mencius were just revealing their common belief in the need for ideal governance rather than calling for reverence for the Zhou dynasty, a point that King Chŏngjo emphasized in particular.21

Tasan Chŏng Yagyong, who submitted “*Maengja Taech’aengmun*” (孟子對策問, Response to Questions on the *Mencius*) during the same period, also argued that Confucius’s intention was to “actualize wangjŏng,” not to revere the Zhou dynasty. In other words, he emphasized the ideology of wangjŏng, rather than reverence for the Zhou dynasty in particular.22 Now, by using the expression of *chonwang* rather than *chonju*, and going one step further by adopting the expression

18 Yongjo sillok (英祖實錄, Veritable records of the reign of King Yongjo), August 5th, 21st year. “King” in “*chonwang* (尊王)” means the “sage king (wangju, 王者)” and was regarded as a title that can only be conferred on the Chinese emperor when he rules according to the ideal and righteous way. Therefore, in Chosŏn society, there existed the view that the title could not be bestowed upon someone like King Yongjo, a feudal lord.

19 As the Zhou dynasty in actual practice could not realize ideal rule, *chonju* typically meant reverence for the monarchy in general, not for the Zhou dynasty per se. It was also used as a reminder to continue revering the Zhou dynasty as the state of the Son of Heaven (天子) despite the decline of the dynasty.


21 “Yang Hyewang” (梁惠王), *Ch'usŏ ch'un'gi* (都書春記, Discussions on the Book of *Mencius* in Spring), vol. 1 in *Hongjae chŏnsŏ*, vol. 120.

22 “Maengja ch’aek” (孟子策), in *Tasan simunjip* (茶山詩文集, Collection of Tasan’s poetry and prose), vol. 8.
Chŏng Yagyong’s Perception of His Age and His Discourse on Wangjong

By the mid-1630s, Chinese ideas from the Ming and Qing dynasties and Western ideas from the Renaissance and the Scientific Revolution had begun to flow into Chosŏn society through envoys returning from missions to Beijing. Several intellectuals began to consider “Chunghwa” as a broad concept that transcended regional or ethnic boundaries before Chŏng Yagyong, but at the same time showed interest in certain technical and scientific achievements of Qing China. The intellectuals of the Namin faction associated with Sŏngho Yi Ik with whom Chŏng Yagyong studied belonged to this group, and Chŏng’s ideas are therefore in part a reflection of this intellectual atmosphere. In his farewell essays to two envoys preparing to leave for Beijing, Ch’amp’an (Vice Minister) Yi Kiyang (李基讓) and Kyori (one of the mid-level offices of Chosŏn) Han Ch’ung (韓致應), Chŏng requested that they introduce scientific technology from China that could bring practical benefits to the general public, rather than pure scholarship or

haengwang. Chosŏn came to regard itself as the only place where wangjong could be actualized. If Chosŏn intellectuals’ theory of benevolent governance before the seventeenth century was an effort to guarantee an equal position with regard to China, during the eighteenth century, Chosŏn intellectuals came to promote, without any consideration of Chinese dynasties, an independent debate on how to realize wangjong by themselves. Chŏng Yagyong’s argument on wangjong, which is the focus of the second part of this article, was put forward against this background. He proposed a more developed theory on wangjong based on his notion of “Chunghwa.” Following the investigation of Chŏng Yagyong’s ideas about wangjong, we will discuss his political views concerning the way wangjong should be actualized.

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23 Using the term chonwang seems to indicate reverence for the ideal Chinese emperor because of the nuances that the word “chon” has. But by adding the character “haeng” (行) to wang as in “haengwang” (行王), this connotation is obliterated completely and the implication of the independence of practicing wangjong in Chosŏn accentuated.

24 For more references on Chosŏn as Chunghwa, see U Kyŏngsŏp, Chosŏn Chunghwa-ju-ui ui sŏngnip Hwa Tong  Asia [The Establishment of Chosŏn as Chunghwa and East Asia] (Seoul: Unistory, 2013). This book records and evaluates preceding research and, in particular, focuses on Little Chunghwa in the first and second chapters. U explains that the concept of “Chunghwa” was very popular among the Chosŏn intellectuals from the late seventeenth century to the eighteenth century and that its meaning was not limited to reverence for a particular Chinese dynasty or culture, but rather mostly used to indicate the ideal Confucian civilization.

25 In an article that is helpful for understanding the intellectual environment surrounding Chŏng Yagyong, Martina Deuchler has introduced the social background of his thought, his interpersonal relations, and his academic activities. She presents Chŏng Yagyong’s relationships with his relatives Yi Pyŏk (李鎬) and Yi Sung hun (李承薰) who helped introduce Catholicism into Korea, and discusses the Namin (南人) faction of pioneer intellectuals who inherited and transmitted the scholarship of Songho Yi Ik (星湖 李穀), and the tendencies in the thought of King Chŏngjo and other intellectuals. See her “Tasan Chŏng Yag-yong An Appreciation,” Tasanhak 16 (2010): 8-13. In chapter 2 of his Chŏng Yagyong: Korea’s challenge to Orthodox neo-Confucianism (State University of New York Press, 1997), Mark Setton also introduces Chŏng Yagyong’s family background, the conflict between his faction, the Southerners, and the conservative Old Doctrine (Noron) faction, the influence he received from the encyclopedic scholarship of Yi Ik (李穀), and the influence of Western Learning on Tasan’s early thought.
philosophy. In the following excerpt from his essay to Han Ch'iŭng it becomes clear that he did not understand Chunghwa as identical to the geographical or political concept of China:

What is located in the center when looked at from the four directions, can be seen as Chunghwa [the “Middle Kingdom”], no matter where it is. So how could there be a so-called “Eastern Country”? If everywhere you go is all Chunghwa, where does the so-called Chunghwa exist? When we talk about Chunghwa, what are the standards for it in our mind? Generally we regard that place as Chunghwa where Yao, Shun, Yu, and Tang’s ideal governance has been realized, or where one finds the teachings of Confucius, Yan Yuan (顏淵), Zi Si (子思), and Mencius. Now where is the place that could be called Chunghwa? If we talk about sagely governance and sagely teachings, our country has obtained these long ago, so is it necessary to search for them someplace far away now? Yet the agricultural technologies that could facilitate crop harvests are benefits handed down from able and virtuous officials of ancient China. The reason why people excel in refined literary works and arts is because of the heritage from prominent literati of ancient China. Now what we should learn from China are merely these things.

Chŏng Yagyong regarded the place where Yao and Shun’s governance and Confucius and Mencius’s teachings exist as Chunghwa. As mentioned earlier, by the second half of the eighteenth century, a notion of Chunghwa which was no longer tied to the central territory of China had become very popular throughout Chosŏn society. Yet Chŏng Yagyong’s viewpoint concerning the meaning of Chunghwa is related to the realization of wangjŏng, as he emphasized in “Maengja ch'ae'k.” This is because what Yao and Shun’s ideal politics refer to is nothing other than wangjŏng. In his “Maengja ch’ae’k,” Chŏng Yagyong’s standpoint was similar to that of Yulgok toward Kija’s doctrine in Hongfan in that he depicted the actualization of wangjŏng as first laying down the economic foundation for the masses by adopting a system of land division (chŏngjŏnje) and then educating the people in the ways of filial piety and brotherly deference by reorganizing the school system. In his Kyŏngse yuŏ’yo (經世遺表, Memorial on Statecraft), he also quoted the “Yaodian” (堯典) chapter of the Shujing (書經, Book of History) where Yao and Shun’s political policies were recorded, stating that a central aspect of wangjŏng was

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26 “Song Yi ch’æmp’æn (Kiyang) sa Yonggyŏng sŏ” (送李參判 (基讓) 使燕京序), in Tasan simunjip, vol. 13.
27 “Song Han kyorì (Ch’iûng) sa yŏn sŏ (siwi sŏjanggw’an)” (送韓校理 (致應) 使燕序 (時為書狀官)), Tasan simunjip, vol. 13.
28 Anders Karlsson, “Geography and Civilization: Chŏng Yagyong and Late Chosŏn Notions of Chunghwa,” Tasanhak 16 (2010): 103-20. Karlsson argues that modern researchers over-emphasize the idea that late-Chosŏn Confucian intellectuals, including Chŏng Yagyong, had transcended the Chinese outlook on civilization and the barbarians, when they in fact had not. When Karlsson says that the contentions of recent researchers are exaggerated, it seems that he takes this view on the premise that Chosŏn intellectuals remained excessively submissive to China. It is our opinion that because of this premise, he fails to see late Chosŏn Confucian intellectuals’ concept of Chunghwa in a broader context and to positively evaluate their ideas.
29 “Maengja ch’ae’k” (孟子策), in Tasan simunjip, vol. 8.
The implementation of chŏngjŏnje, the farmland system that comprised both public and private fields, and inculcating the virtue of filial piety and brotherly deference in people through able and virtuous officials.30

The wangjŏng ideology articulated in Kyŏngse yu[p’y]o starts from the economic field and takes as its final goal the establishment of a Confucian social order built on the interpersonal virtues of filial piety and brotherly deference. To better understand the supporting ideology behind the implementation of this kind of wangjŏng, one can consult the “Hongfan” chapter of Sangsŏ kohun (尚書古訓, The Ancients’ Teachings about the Book of History), Chŏng Yagyong’s commentaries on the “Hongfan” chapter of the Shujing. The fourteenth section of the “Hongfan” chapter in the Shujing contains such sentences as the following: “Avoid deflection, avoid partiality; Broad and long is the royal way. Avoid partiality, avoid deflection, level and easy is the royal way (無偏無黨, 王道蕩蕩, 無黨無偏, 王道平平).”31 This means, in Chŏng Yagyong’s understanding, the pursuit of wangjŏng by establishing a fair political standard, the “utmost point” (極) of perfection.32 In his annotations of “Royal Perfection” (皇極),33 the fifth of the nine divisions of “Hongfan,” he argued that the king should establish the “utmost point” as the fair ethical standard, regulate deflection and partiality, and practice justice.34

With the concept of “Royal Perfection” from “Hongfan,” Chŏng Yagyong seems to approve of a strong royal power. Therefore many scholars argue that as a Namin, Chŏng Yagyong sympathized with King Chŏngjo’s political thought and developed an ideology supporting a powerful king. Pae Pyŏngsam even comes to the extreme conclusion that Chŏng Yagyong was a member of a revolutionary group within the Namin faction, the core group supporting King Chŏngjo ideologically, which was fostered by King Chŏngjo’s promotion of the Kyujanggak (奎章閣, the royal library).35 Even if they do not draw such extreme conclusions, many researchers still tend to interpret Chŏng Yagyong’s political views as a discourse endorsing the consolidation of the king’s power. Kim Taeŏng, for example, concludes that the driving force of Chŏng Yagyong’s reform theory ultimately derives from “royal power”; Kim Sangjun suggests that the discourse on ritual by the Namin faction, Chŏng Yagyong included, led to the strengthening of the king’s power; and Pak Hyŏnmo proposed that the ideology of impartiality with regard to factional conflict (t'angpyŏng chŏngch'î 蕩平政治), elaborated in King Chŏngjo’s

31 The English translation for this phrase comes from James Legge’s translation of the Book of History.
33 The translation “Royal Perfection” is from Legge’s translation of the Book of History. The Chinese term actually means “perfect standard.”
34 “Hongbŏm” (洪範), in Sangsŏ kohun, vol. 4.
35 Pae Pyŏngsam, “Chosŏn hugi kaehyŏk sasang úi koch’al. Chŏngjo wa Chŏng Yagyong ŭl chungsim ŭro” (An examination of reform ideas in late Chosŏn: centered on King Chŏngjo and Chŏng Yagyong), Han’guk chongch’î úi ch’aejongyŏl (Rethinking Korean Politics) (Seoul: The Korean Political Science Association, 1996), 8-23.
discourse on the sage kings, is similar to Chǒng Yagyong’s views on kingship.36

In some specific issues, for example in the case of chǒngjongje reforms, Chǒng Yagyong did indeed argue that the king should impose his will. In the preface of Kyǒngse yup’yo, he also argued for positive action-involved governance (yuwi chǒngch’i 有為政治),37 and in the “Kyǒngjǒnsa” (經田司, Bureau of Farmland Management) section of the “Chigwan hojo” (地官戶曹) chapter in Kyǒngse yup’yo, he also explained the necessity of pushing forward the state policy of ensuring public farmland, similar to King Yǒngjo’s forceful implementation of kyunyǒkṣop (均役法) taxation.38 We cannot, however, mistake Chǒng Yagyong’s attention to the king’s power in promoting some specific social reforms for his overall political views. In fact, if we carefully read his depiction of the power of the king and the high-ranking officials in Kyǒngse yup’yo, we can ascertain that he was not arguing for a strengthening of sovereign power, but instead stressing symbolic sovereign power that represented governmental authority. Chǒng Yagyong’s discourse on wangjǒng as reflected in his annotations to the “Honglan” chapter of the Shujing is aimed at achieving a perfectly impartial and just government, as shown in recent research.39

In order to clarify how Chǒng Yagyong thought the ideal of wangjǒng should be implemented, we will investigate three features of his political thought that are of particular significance in this respect.

Chǒng Yagyong’s Political Philosophy: Aiming at the Realization of Wangjǒng
Practice-Oriented Self-Cultivation: The Basis for “Yuwi Chǒngch’i”
As previously mentioned, Chǒng Yagyong’s discourse on wangjǒng in Kyǒngse yup’yo starts from the resolution of economic issues (chǒngjongje) and ends by educating people to practice the virtues of filial piety and brotherly deference (孝悌). In Chǒng Yagyong’s discourse on ethics, filial piety and brotherly deference enjoy equal status

37 “Pangnye ch’obonin” (邦禮艸本引, Introduction to the rough draft on state rituals), in Kyǒngse yup’yo, vol. 1.
38 “Kyǒngjǒnsa” (經田司), in Kyǒngse yup’yo, vol. 1. Kyunyǒkṣop was a tax law enacted with the purpose of alleviating the burden of military service during the reign of King Yǒngjo. The law lowered the levy from two rolls of linen (kamp’o, 裙布) every year to one roll every year.
39 Kim T’aeyŏng contends, diverging from his earlier viewpoint, that Chǒng Yagyong was not arguing for strengthening the king’s power, but instead underlining the fairness of the king as an institutional king and a representative of governmental authority. Kim T’aeyŏng, “Kyǒngse yup’yo e turonan Tasan kyǒngseron ui yoksajok sǒnggyok” (The historical character of Tasan’s statecraft discourse in Kyǒngse yup’yo), Taege yǒnpo 129 (2011). Yi Ponggyu, “Kyǒnghahchok maengnagak esô pons Tasan ui chongch’iron” (Tasan’s political discourse from the perspective of the Confucian classics), Tasan Chǒng yagyong yǒngǒ’su (2012). The following authors also tend toward such an opinion: Cho Sŏnggil, “Chǒng Yagyong ui ch’ongs’i kyǒngye kaebyok sesang yǒngǒ’su” (A study of Chǒng Yagyong’s reform ideology on the political economy) (PhD diss., Yonsei University, 1991); Kang...
with the Four Virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom (仁義禮智四德). According to Chŏng Yagyong, these virtues are to be nurtured through practice in interpersonal relationships. As a Confucian intellectual, Chŏng Yagyong also emphasized moral self-cultivation. But self-cultivation as he conceived it is not the introverted practice of virtue emphasized in Zhu Xi’s teachings, but rather an extroverted practice that exercises virtue in relations with others in concrete situations. In other words, the Four Virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom, or the virtues of filial piety, brotherly deference, and compassion are not intrinsic to human nature at birth, but are extrinsic qualities acquired through practice in relationships with others.⁴⁰ He said, “Virtue is putting my righteous thoughts into practice. Without practice, there will be no virtue at all. Although we call filial piety, brotherly deference, loyalty, faithfulness, benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom virtues, if we do not practice them ourselves, how could it be possible to say that there is virtue in our mind?”⁴¹ In summary, he understood virtue as something that had to be put into practice and manifested externally. This point of view is one of the most important philosophical themes which runs through all of Chŏng Yagyong’s annotations of the classical canon of the Four Books (四書).⁴²

Chŏng Yagyong’s argument for a practice-oriented self-cultivation of virtue, which is contrary to the ideology of self-cultivation based on the assumption of inborn morality in Zhu Xi’s philosophy, is also integral to his political views.⁴³ In contrast with literati affiliated with the Noron (老論) faction, who in general advocated “governance without taking unnatural actions” (無為而治) and “governance pivoting on the prime minister” (宰相委任), Chŏng Yagyong argued for “active governance” (yuwi chŏngch’i) engaging both the king and the officials. This is why he reiterated in the preface of Kyŏngse yup’yo that realization of the ideal of Yao and Shun’s governance demanded positive action. He not only interpreted ancient sagely governance as being intensely proactive, but also emphasized active political participation by high officials in the central government. In particular, he insisted that the Three State Councilors (三政丞) should educate the king and the crown prince directly, administer state affairs through the Uijŏngbu (議政府, the highest administrative body, which controlled the Six Boards), and Chungch’ubu (中樞府, the organ in charge of military affairs and the arsenal during the Chosŏn period) within the bureaucratic system, and act as the general superintendents of various administrative branches, such as the Bureau of Farmland Management.

Sŏkhw’a, “Chŏng Yagyong uij kwanje kaehyŏgan yŏnggu” (A study of Chŏng Yagyong’s reform plan for the bureaucratic system), Han’guksa’rŏn 21 (1989).

⁴² “Wŏndŏk” (原德), in Tasan simunjip, vol. 10.
⁴¹ Chungyong chajam (中庸自箴), Self-admonition while reading the Doctrine of the Mean), vol. 3.
⁴² “Koja” (告子), in Maengju Yaui (孟子要義, Essentials of the Mencius), vol. 2. “Hagi” (學而), in Nonŏ koğumju (論語古今話, Past and present annotations to the Analects of Confucius), vol. 1.
⁴³ In a chapter that provides an understanding of how Tasan’s criticism of human nature and the self-cultivation theories of Zhu Xi’s Neo Confucianism continue in his political theory, Mark Setton explains the relationship between moral conduct, which Tasan accentuates, and virtue through the
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(経田司), which was responsible for assessing, distributing, and managing the country's agricultural land.**44** He asserted that, in a government system that achieved the greatest fairness and transparency through adherence to the wangjong ideology, all the officials (including the king), would be reborn as practical statesmen who would actively fulfill their duties.

Although he agreed on the importance of “cultivating oneself and governing others” with other Confucian intellectuals, Chông Yagyong was distinctive in that he extricated himself from the introspective ideology of individual cultivation in Zhu Xi's philosophy, which was excessively slanted toward individual transcendence, and instead highlighted an active and extroverted type of practice-oriented cultivation of virtue by the king and the scholar-officials.**45** He also emphasized the moral practice of the masses in society, as constituting a significant part of wangjong. In his annotations to the tenth chapter of the Great Learning (大學), which articulates the general guidelines of Confucian governance, Chông Yagyong explained how the chapter discussed matters such as seeing to the needs of the aged in the villages, properly respecting the elderly, and taking care of orphans.**46** While criticizing the views of Zhu Xi's commentary on the Great Learning, Chông Yagyong argued that since the ninth chapter had already elaborated on the issue of individual magistrates or officials voluntarily practicing filial piety and brotherly deference, the tenth chapter was not a discussion about the self-cultivation of statesmen, as Zhu maintained, but of the performance of rites that helped the people exercise filial piety and brotherly deference.**47** Therefore Chông insisted that the magistrates in the local regions should, in order to guide the populace in the practice of moral principles, play a pivotal role by regularly holding rites that symbolized the support of the aged and deference for the elderly, and by the fostering of orphans.**48**

This is also reflected in the “Yejŏn” (禮典, ceremonies and rites) chapter of Mengmin simsŏ (牧民心書, Reflections on Caring for the People). Chông Yagyong argued that local officials sent by the central government should hold regular

expression “moral activism.” He further introduces in detail Tasan's political philosophic views constituting his theory of government articulated through moral examples by comparing them with Zhu Xi’s position on The Great Learning. See Mark Setton, Chông Yagyong Korea’s Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism (State University of New York Press, 1997), 103-22.

**44** “Chôngjŏn ú (ი)” (井田議 (一)), in Kyŏngse yap’yo, vol. 7.

**45** Zhu Xi differed from Tasan, who believed that the Four Virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety and wisdom are acquired in the course of interpersonal interactions, in that he thought that the Four Virtues are inherent to human nature, in other words, they were bequeathed by nature. Accordingly, Zhu Xi proposed an introspective way of self-cultivation, which traces back the outwardly revealed emotions to search for and ascertain one’s internal nature. For more references, see Zhu Xi's comments in the sixth chapter, "Gongsunch'ou (公孫丑)," of his Mengzi jizhu (孟子集注). See also Zhu Xi’s letter to Lin Zexiu (林開之, in the third volume of Zhuxi ji). In this letter, criticizing Zhang Nanxuan (張南軒), Zhu Xi emphasized the necessity of weifa hamyang (未發涵養), which means cultivating the inward nature before emotions are exposed outwardly.

**46** Annotations to the tenth chapter of the Daxue.

**47** “Sowi p’yŏngch’ŏnha” (所謂平天下), in Taehak kongŭi (大學公議, Public discussion on the Great Learning), vol. 1.

**48** “Chaech’inmin” (在親民), in Taehak kongŭi, vol. 1.
meetings in local Confucian schools (郷校, hyanggyo) that would encourage an ethos of filial piety, brotherly deference and benevolence. Above all he insisted that local officials and community leaders should cultivate their own virtue. Boudewijn Walraven draws attention to Chŏng Yagyong’s emphasis on local officials’ study of the cultivation of self-restraint to help control and manage private emotions in the first part of Mongmin simso. Walraven says that the reason Chŏng Yagyong stressed that officials should always control their emotions and practice social public values lies in his deep interest in good government. In fact, Chŏng Yagyong was anticipating the laying of the very foundation for wangjŏng by proposing a new type of human character that went beyond Zhu Xi’s ideology. He believed that the realization of wangjŏng could be promoted by emphasizing the active practice of one’s role by both government officials and the general public through the discourse of “virtue being external” (德外在說) and active governance.

Pyŏndŭng (辨等) Politics: The Integration of the Central and Local Systems of Government and the Establishment of a Hierarchical Order

Kyŏngse yup’yo formulates a long-term plan for state governance based on the central bureaucratic system, while Mongmin simso consists of best-practice solutions for specific problems. Thus the two texts are not perfectly in accordance with each other in terms of content. It is clear, however, that in his writings on statecraft, Chŏng Yagyong was trying to propose an inclusive and systematic governing structure that could bring together the central and local systems of government. According to Kyŏngse yup’yo, Chŏng Yagyong intended to reorganize the existing eight administrative areas into twelve provinces. He advocated strengthening the central government’s control over the people and natural resources by increasing the power of the provincial governors and reducing the role of the prefectural or county magistrates. He also suggested that, once towns throughout the country had been ranked according to their population and amount of farmland, the evaluation system on the basis of which taxes and corvée duties were calculated should not be changed at will, as one of the important principles of wangjŏng. Through this system, Chŏng Yagyong was attempting to prevent the abuse of authority by the scholar class, powerful clans, and village officials in the provinces, and to consistently apply the central government’s governing principles across the whole country.

49 “Oktang chin’go kwajo yŏlch’aja” (玉堂進考課條例箚子), in Tasan simunjip, vol. 9, “Kyomin” (敎民) and “Hŭnhak” (興學), in Mongmin simso, vol. 7.
51 Walraven’s “Tasan’s Writings,” 240.
52 “Chach’an myojimyŏng” (自撰墓誌銘), in Tasan simunjip, vol. 16.
53 “Kunhyŏn punye” (郡縣分錄), in Kyŏngse yup’yo, vol. 3.
54 Kang Sŏkhwa, “Chosŏn hugi chėdŏ u unyŏng kwa Chŏng Yagyong u kaehyŏgan” (The operation of local institutions in late Chosŏn and Chŏng Yagyong’s reform plan), Han’guk hakpo 65 (1991).
55 “Kunhyŏn punye” (郡縣分錄), in Kyŏngse yup’yo, vol. 3.
In Kyŏngse yu$p’yo, Chŏng Yagyong creatively reinterpreted one of the ancient classics, the Zhoulì (周禮, Rites of the Zhou Dynasty). He regarded ch'eguk kyŏngya (體國經野), a phrase found in the preface of the “Liuguan” (六官) chapter of the Zhoulì, as the first step to carrying out wangjŏng. According to him, there is nothing more important than demarcating the boundary between the central and the local by constructing the king’s palace in the capital city (體國, ch’eguk) and managing the local regions (經野, kyŏngya). According to his well-known-design for this, hyangsuje (郷遂制), Chŏng Yagyong planned to push forward governance and education by dividing the capital city into nine districts so it would have a layout similar in shape to the Chinese character for “well” (井 chŏng/jing), with the central district as the king’s palace, the one in front of the palace as the location of administrative institutions, the one behind the palace as a special zone for commerce and industry, and the six areas (郷, hyang) on the right and the left sides as residential areas. Outside of the six hyang, there would be six su (遂) in the suburban area for soldiers and peasants devoted to the training of the military and the cultivation of civilian farmland. Chŏng Yagyong’s “six hyang system” (六郷制) is significant in that he explained that the hyangnye (郷禮, “village” rituals), which were usually thought to be performed only in rural areas, were first performed in the capital city. In the course of a debate with Sin Chak (申綽), he insisted that “village rituals,” such as the local arrow-shooting ceremony (hyangsa’rye 郷射禮) and the local drinking ceremony, (hyangŭmjurye 郷飲酒禮) were first performed in Seoul in the six hyang.

Kyŏngse yu$p’yo, originally had, when it was a rough draft, the title Pangnye ch’ŏbon (邦禮舛本, Manuscript on State Rituals), demonstrating how much it focused on state rituals. As recent findings have demonstrated, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, research on the Xiaoxue (小學, Elementary Learning) and Zhuži jiali (朱子家禮, Zhu Xi School Family Rituals) was very popular among Confucian intellectuals. Their works on ritual even surpassed in number the publications on ritual compiled by the government, such as

56 In Chŏng Yagyong’s time, as today, hyang usually referred to the countryside. However, by comparing ancient Confucian sources and various books on history, Tasan argued that historically hyang did not mean a rural community as compared with Seoul, but was a word indicating the six neighborhoods within the capital, where the king’s palace was also located. While hyang was a term indicating neighborhoods inside the capital, su (遂) was interpreted as a term referring to the area outside of Seoul. See “Tap Sin Chaejung chesa sŏ” (答申在中第三書), and “Tap Sin Chaejung chesa sŏ” (答申在中第四書), in Tasan simun’ip, vol. 20.

57 “Yukpu” (六部), in Kyŏngse yu$p’yo, vol. 1.

58 “Yukpu kudung to” (六部九等圖), in Kyŏngse yu$p’yo, vol. 3.


60 Chŏng said that Kyŏngse yu$p’yo was not about law, but about rites. This reveals his aspiration to actualize governance through rites which accord with human nature instead of through repressive laws. But “rites” in late Chosŏn society does not simply mean customs and conventions, but might be accompanied by coercive force. In this sense, rites could be seen as having the meaning and the effect of today’s law.

61 Chang Tongu has analyzed the popularization of Zhuži jiali (朱子家禮, Zhuxi-school Family Rituals) and Chosŏn Confucian intellectuals’ research trends regarding family rituals between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries in detail in the following articles: “Zhuži jiali suyong kwa pogŏp kwajŏng” (The
Kukcho oryeūi (國朝五禮儀, The Five State Rituals). Deuchler contends that the phenomenon of the complete observation of various rites centering on the ritual hearth of the family, especially the funeral rites and the ancestral rites articulated in ritual handbooks like Zhuzi jiali, is the most significant feature of Chosŏn society in those days.

We should pay attention not only to the fact that by the seventeenth century Chosŏn intellectuals enhanced the stature of family rituals according to the Neo-Confucian principles of the patriarchal clan, but also note that just before this period, intellectuals like Yi T'oegye and Yi Yulgok had first tried to establish Korean-style village compacts (郷約 hyangyak) to Confucianize village communities. It became realistically possible to enforce Confucian village rituals only after villages inhabited by people with the same surname, based on the patrilineal system, gradually came into being during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

When a century or two later, Chŏng Yagyong, in his writing on state rituals in Kyŏngse yup'yo, argued that village rituals, such as the local arrow-shooting ceremony, and the village compacts were actually first practiced in the capital city, he criticized in this way the situation where hyangnye were only maintained and practiced in the local regions and not practiced at all in the capital in his time. He recognized that village rituals once performed in the capital city had been abolished there and were practiced only in the countryside. But he was deeply concerned that the local Confucian schools where the village rituals were performed were misused for private purposes by local powerful clans, who colluded with low-ranking officials in local communities, weakening the magistrates to an embarrassing degree. That is why he first put forward the principles of enforcing the six hyang system and hyangnye in Kyŏngse yup'yo, and then in the “Yejŏn” chapter of Mongmin simso elaborated the principles of establishing village compacts and having magistrates perform village rituals at the local Confucian school. In acceptance and popularization process of Zhuzi jiali, Kukhak yŏngu 16 (2010); “Karye chusŏksŏ rŭl tŏnggae pon Chosŏn yehak tŭ chiŏn'ŭn kwajŏng” (The development process of Chosŏn's rite studies through annotated editions of Zhuzi jiali), Tongyong ch'ŏlhae 34 (2010); “Chosŏn sidae karye yŏngu rŭl wihan saeroun sagak kwa panggoip” (A new perspective and methodology for researching family rite studies in the Chosŏn Dynasty), Han'guk sasangsahak 39 (2011).

Deuchler, The Confucian Transformation of Korea: A Study of Society and Ideology, 111-22. Deuchler says that around the 16th century Chosŏn’s neo-Confucian intellectuals, apart from rite books compiled by the government, inclined to study the ancient ritual institutions in the Chinese rites classics, Zhoulı (周禮), Yili (儀禮) and Liji (禮記) as well as the Zhuzi jiali.

Deuchler, The Confucian Transformation, 5-6. She argues that we should not only focus on the problem of property inheritance, but also need to pay attention to the selection of the person who performs family rituals, the “trueborn eldest son” as the ritual heir, using the concept of the “ritual lineage.” Her view is appropriate in the sense that Chosŏn was similar to a kind of “ritual republic.”

More historical data may be needed to prove this. Ko Yongjin has suggested ways to understand this issue in an article which probes into the regional differentiations and characteristics of village rituals and ritual studies in the mid-Chosŏn period. See Ko Yongjin, “16-17 segi yehak e chiyo'chŏk punhwa kwajŏng kwa ku t'ŭch'ing” (The regional differentiation process of ritual studies and its characteristics in the 16th and the 17th centuries), Kukhak yŏngu 13 (2008); Ko Yongjin, Chosŏn chunggyi yehak sasangsa (History of ritual thought in the mid-Chosŏn period) (Seoul: Han'gilsa, 1995).

“Kanggo hyangnye sŏ” (江皋鄉射禮序), in Tasan simunip, vol. 12, Preface.

“Pyŏndung” (辨等), in Mongmin simso, vol. 8.
this way the local officer would directly guide people's education on filial piety, brotherly deference, and benevolence by supporting the aged and by regularly performing village rituals such as the local community drinking ceremony, and the arrow-shooting ceremony.\(^{67}\)

Donald Baker makes an important point in an article in which he analyzes Chŏng Yagyong's views on the rituals of the Confucian state. He argues that, even though Tasan expressed a religious belief similar to the doctrine of a monotheistic God in texts like Chungyong chajam (中庸自箴, Self-admonition While Reading the Doctrine of the Mean) and Simgyŏng mirhŏm (心經密驗, The Hidden Efficacy of the Heart Classic), he took a pragmatic point of view in texts like Mongmin simsŏ. For instance, according to Baker's argument, Tasan urged local officials to stabilize the Confucian order by strictly carrying out ceremonies approved by the Confucian state, emphasizing in particular altars and rites for the gods of land and grain (who functioned as a metonym for the state), the ancestral spirits, and the official local tutelary deity.\(^{68}\) Moreover, according to Baker, if we look closely at Chŏng Yagyong's severe criticism of heretical beliefs such as Shamanism and Buddhism, we can clearly see that Chŏng Yagyong was, from a typical Confucian intellectual's perspective, striving to defend ritual hegemony by consistently practicing the ceremonies and rites that were universally accepted in the Confucian state.\(^{69}\) In fact, Chŏng Yagyong left behind many works that analyze in detail various rites like funeral ceremonies and ancestral rites, and insisted that at the state level all sorts of rites should be observed uniformly.\(^{70}\)

We agree with Baker that it is important to provide a comprehensive assessment of his views on rites if we want to understand the substructure of Chŏng Yagyong's philosophy. As previously stated, it is necessary to systematically analyze his perceptions of the family rituals of individual literati, together with Kyŏngse yup'yo, which deals with state rituals as well as providing detailed regulations for local village rituals. But little research has been conducted that

\(^{67}\) According to Mongmin simsŏ, magistrates dispatched to local regions should start their work by reforming the local Confucian school system. Magistrates should perform the sacrifices to Confucius in the Hall of Great Achievement (大成殿) at the local Confucian school, read out in public the text of the village compact every first month of the four seasons and hold the Village Drinking Ceremony and the Village Arrow-shooting Ceremony each season, both of which were based on the hierarchy of social status and age. “Hŭnhak” (興學), in Mongmin simsŏ, vol. 7, “Yangno aemin” (養老愛民), in Mongmin simsŏ, vol. 3.


\(^{69}\) Baker, “Shamans, Catholics and Chŏng Yagyong,” 145-50, 172-73. Compared to how Tasan strove to strictly maintain social order when he was a government official, as an individual he showed great interest in non-orthodox thought like Buddhism and Daoism, and when he was exiled to Kangjin, he developed friendly ties with Buddhist teachers. For more on this topic, see Kim Daeyeol, “The Social and Cultural Presence of Buddhism in the Lives of Confucian Literati in Late Chosŏn: The Case of Tasan,” Seoul Journal of Korean Studies 25, no. 2 (2012): 213-41.

\(^{70}\) Donald Baker argues that during Chŏng Yagyong’s time, the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in addition to official rituals, there was also a wide range of activities called umsi (淫祠, illicit rituals) which were performed without official authorization. The Catholic Yun Chich’ung’s refusal to hold ancestral mourning rituals and his burning of ancestral tablets, Ch’oe Sihyŏng’s Tonghak movement, shamanism and other folk rituals, and some Buddhist and Daoist heretical rituals, are considered by
analyzes the relations among state rituals, royal rituals, village rituals, and family rituals within Chong Yagyong’s ritual system, and investigates how his system is different from the pre-existing Neo-Confucian ritual system. There exist only a few publications by Chang Tongu, Pak Chongch’ŏn, and Chŏn Songgŏn that focus on Chong Yagyong’s ideas about family rituals and royal rituals. It is therefore necessary to reexamine, by carefully re-reading his works on ritual, how Chong Yagyong sought to establish the ritual uniformity of the Confucian state, with a core role for central authority. At the same time, it may be inferred that the regulations for family rituals should also be in accordance with those for state rituals, in line with Chong Yagyong’s suggestion in Kyŏngse yup’yo and Mongmin simso’s arguments that local governing systems should be coordinated with the central administrative system.

Recently, Kim Ho has published an article analyzing “Tasan Chŏng Yagyong’s scheme for democracy,” based on a reading of Mongmin simso. He argues that the political goal of Chŏng Yagyong was to realize an autonomous moral community composed of all the people. He contends that in rural society, which comprised the Confucian scholar class and local powerful clans, as well as the masses, the common people’s level of moral consciousness was extremely low and the abuse of power by local clans very serious, and that for that reason, Chŏng Yagyong considered it imperative that the Confucian scholar class lead village rituals during a transitional period. However, he claims that what Chŏng Yagyong pursued ultimately was an autonomous moral community where members of

<table>
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<td>Royal Family Rituals</td>
<td>Chŏngse ch’ŏnjanghyŏn (正體傳重辨), Kukch’o ch’ŏl’byo (國朝典禮考)</td>
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<td>Sangnye sajŏn (正體家式), Sarye kasik (四體家式)</td>
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Chŏng Yagyong’s works related to ritual scholarship

Baker to be major examples of resistance to Chosŏn Korea’s complete Confucianization. These licentious rituals were regarded as a violation of myŏngbu (名分), the differentiation of privileges and obligations according to social status. In this sense, we can say that, in his Mongmin simso, Chŏng Yagyong was trying to maintain the ritual hegemony at the state level by regulating those threat factors in advance through the differentiation of social status or “hierarchical rituals.” See Donald Baker, “Rituals and Resistance in Chosŏn Korea,” Sungnyun Journal of East Asian Studies 7, no. 2 (October 2007): 11-13. Boudewijn Walraven has provided a detailed depiction of the phenomenon that in late Chosŏn Korea, in the lifetime of Chol Ch’ungsim, “Popular Religious in a Confucianized Society,” in Culture and the State in late Chosŏn Korea, 160-98.


Kim Ho, “Tasan Chŏng Yagyong u minju kilhoek” (Tasan Chŏng Yagyong’s scheme for democracy), in Konggongsŏng ai wiği wa sirhak (Practical learning and the crisis of the public spirit) (Proceedings of an academic conference at the Institute for Korean Studies at Yonsei University, 2013), 107.

Kim Ho, 102-05.
Some skepticism with regard to Kim Ho's opinions is justified. As is demonstrated in the “Pyŏndŭng” (Distinguishing Social Status) section of the “Yejeon” chapter in Mongmin simso, Chŏng Yagyong emphasized the importance of a rigorous hierarchy of social status and a hierarchical social order based on an individual’s capability and moral cultivation. According to Chŏng Yagyong, the state system could be maintained only when the hierarchy of status, such as the difference between teacher and student or officials and the people, was carefully observed and respected.75 Certainly he was not arguing for a classification of people purely on the basis of their status in the social hierarchy, but he did believe that governance was possible only when status hierarchy was clearly defined, and he criticized the impropriety of the policy of restraining the powerful and helping the weak (抑强扶弱), which supported the disadvantaged, the masses at the bottom of society.76 In the chapter “Kukchagam” (國子監, The National Confucian Academy) in Kyŏngse yup’yo, he also stated that there were different kinds of teaching methods, and the courses and contents of education directed at the rulers must be different from those directed at the ruled.77

As has been noted above, Chŏng Yagyong believed that the people’s practice of filial piety, brotherly deference, and benevolence depended on their exercising their will. But the multitude’s moral consciousness required education by society’s ruling elite through local Confucian schools and village rituals. This idea can be clearly found in the “Yejeon” chapter of Mongmin simso. Moreover, Chŏng Yagyong thought that the social hierarchy established by pyŏndŭng would not disappear under any circumstances. This being the case, it is doubtful that Chŏng Yagyong’s ultimate dream as envisaged by Kim Ho of an autonomous moral community in which the people become their own masters could ever be realized. Chŏng’s perspective was that although the possibility of individual moral practice exists, the governance of a moral political community ultimately depends on a small group of scholar-officials. If we take into account Chŏng Yagyong’s statement that pyŏndŭng is the core political power valued by the sage kings, Kim Ho’s assessment of “Tasan’s scheme for democracy” may need reconsideration. Because the political community in Chŏng Yagyong’s imagination takes the status hierarchy between the leaders and the followers, the rulers and the ruled, as the most crucial political principle, it will be difficult to discuss his discourse on wangjŏng without considering his understanding of pyŏndŭng.78

75 The fifth article of “Pyŏndŭng,” in Mongmin simso, vol. 8.
76 The fifth article of “Pyŏndŭng,” in Mongmin simso, vol. 8.
78 Martina Deuchler, “Tasan Chong Yag-yong: An Appreciation,” 17-20. According to Deuchler, compared with progressive intellectuals such as Yu Hyŏng-wŏn, Chŏng Yagyong was more conservative, stressing hierarchy and differentiation in the social status order and in relations between the primary and the secondary sons in a family. She argues that in this regard Chŏng Yagyong was not a radical social reformer, and that his writings, such as Mongmin simso, do not constitute a revolutionary manifesto either.
Institutional Approach to Power Regulation: Completion of Bureaucracy and the Public Exercise of Power

According to existing research, centralized governance enforced by a bureaucratic apparatus in Korea dates back to the early tenth century, the time of King Kwangjong of the Koryŏ dynasty. However, in *The Origins of the Chosŏn Dynasty*, which analyzes the origins of the central officials who were engaged in the process of dynastic change dating from the early stages of the Koryŏ dynasty, John Duncan argues that the origins of the bureaucratic system date back to before the tenth century. In the Koryŏ period, political power was segmented and grasped by a number of powerful families in local regions, and the king therefore adopted the civil service exam system and the bureaucracy to strengthen the central government’s control over those regions. Duncan contends that since centralization of the political system had been in progress four centuries before the establishment of the Chosŏn dynasty, the eventual change of dynasty was merely the peak point of this gradual course of political development.

Chosŏn’s scholar class, however, was different from Koryŏ’s local powerful clans or rural officials in that many of them entered officialdom through the civil service exams, and that they were heavily armed with Zhu Xi’s ideology and even finished constructing a ritual system justifying their life norms and principles in conformity with the *Zhuzi jiali* and *Xiaoxue*. Hence, although Koryŏ and Chosŏn were similar in that in the power struggles between central and local authorities the former were winning, leading to a tendency toward centralization, their actual governing systems and ideologies were different. Between the early stages of the Chosŏn dynasty and the time of Chŏng Yagyong, one also finds variation amidst continuity. Chŏng Yagyong witnessed a surge of interest in *Zhuzi jiali* among the local scholar class and various examples of manipulation in local public and private Confucian schools by local powerful clans and village officials, which went against the founding intentions of those schools. He also saw through the weakness of the Neo-Confucian outlook on the world and humankind of those local leaders.

On the one hand, Chŏng Yagyong struggled philosophically to overcome the

His emphasis on *pyŏnŭng* governance has shown such limitations in his thinking. As Deuchler has put it, Chŏng Yagyong insisted that human morality and society could be realized through the perfection and observation of rituals ranging from family rituals to state rituals. In this context it is necessary to recall that the intention of Confucian intellectuals’ emphasis on rituals was basically the differentiation of people’s social status.

79 Refer to Yi Kibaek, ed., *Koryŏ Kwangjong yŏngu* (A study of King Kwangjong of the Koryŏ Dynasty); Pyŏn T’aesŏp, *Koryŏ chŏngch’i’ chedosa yŏngu* (A study of the history of Koryŏ’s political institutions); Pak Ch’anghŭi, *Koryŏ sidae kwallyoje e taehan koch’al* (An examination on Koryŏ’s bureaucracy); Kim ŭigyu, ed., *Koryŏ sacho e kwijok kwa kwallyojeron* (Debates on Koryŏ society: aristocracy or bureaucracy?).


81 Duncan, 278.

82 Martina Deuchler, *The Confucian Transformation of Korea*, 126. Deuchler says that though the elite groups of both Koryŏ and Chosŏn had their roots in the traditional aristocracy and showed no obvious differences with regard to their social background, the elite of Chosŏn had been transformed ideologically. As far as we are concerned, this applies not only to the central elites who participated actively in the establishment of the new dynasty, but also to the rural scholar class throughout the country.
limitations of the Neo-Confucian world view, and on the other hand, he strove to conceive a system of state governance which could regulate the central and the local government more strictly and efficiently. This is also why he proposed the cultivation of a practice-oriented human character that would ensure faithfulness to one’s duties, insisted on a political system based on status hierarchy, and conceived a strict bureaucracy which could regulate the power of both the king and offici[l]d. His discourse on wangjöng can be seen as a comprehensive counter-policy to resolve the problematic situation Chosôn found itself in during the eighteenth century.

In the central bureaucratic system devised by Chông Yagyong in Kyôngse yup’yo, no organization was allowed to be under the private command of the king. The state system he envisaged was restructured around the bureaucracy with the officials of the Six Boards and Uijôngbu (High State Council) managing all political affairs, including those of the king and the royal family. The Royal Secretariat (Sûngjônggwôn 承政院) which reported to and issued the orders of the king was placed under one of the Six Boards, the Board of Personnel Affairs (Ijo 吏曹), in order to prevent the king from recklessly giving orders. The Royal Guard, the Capital City Garrison, and the Central Army mandated in the Kyôngguk taejön were put under the common control of the head officer and the officials of the Board of War (Pyôngjo 兵曹). All other existing royal offices under the king’s direct control were also subordinated to the Board of Official Personnel Affairs. Even the offices responsible for the supervision of government officials and remonstrating with the king when his actions were deemed improper (Sahônbu 司憲府, Office of the Inspector General, and Saganwôn 司諫院, Office of the Censor-General) were also placed under the administrative department. To prevent the king’s arbitral management of the Sahônbu and Saganwôn, Tasan deliberately reshuffled the administration so that, among the six boards, the Saganwôn was placed under the Board of Rites and the Sahônbu was placed under the Board of Justice. Tasan wanted to correct the problems associated with the Saganwôn which lost its responsibility of restricting and criticizing the power of the king when it was placed outside the Six Boards. It was Tasan’s intention to separate the powers of the king and the administration to prevent the king’s arbitral rule. In this sense, we can say that Kyôngse yup’yo followed Chông Tojön’s own argument for the central role of the

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83 Setton points out that it was not Tasan’s intention to only criticize Neo Confucianism. In fact, he made efforts to rejuvenate Confucianism by reinterpreting Neo-Confucianism and going beyond Neo-Confucianism through a critical assessment. Setton also differentiated “Neo-Confucian orthodoxy,” which was reflected in the bureaucracy, the civil service examinations, the central government system, and the state and family rituals, from “orthodox Neo-Confucian thought,” which refers to the ideology supporting those institutions. This differentiation may help us to obtain a comprehensive understanding of Tasan’s philosophical criticism of Neo-Confucian thought and his arguments for institutional reforms. See the introduction of Setton’s Chông Yagyong: Korea’s Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism.

84 Yi Ponggyu, “Kyônghachôk maengnak esô pon Tasan ui chôngch’iron”; Kang Sôkhwa, “Chông Yagyong ui kwanje kachyôgan yôn’gyu.”

85 “Tasan is commonly thought of as a royalist who supported the reform policies of King Chôngjo, but a look into Kyôngse yup’yo, vol. 1, Chungwan yejo (春官禮條), Article 3 and ‘Kukchagam’ tells us that Tasan sharply criticized King Chôngjo’s Kyujanggak literary policy.”
prime minister (冢宰中心論) in Chosôn kyŏngguk chŏn (朝鮮經國典) and Yulgok’s argument for the integration of the royal court and the administrative departments (宮府一體論).

Chŏng Yagyong insisted that the abuse of power should be stopped at its source by reorganizing the bureaucratic system in a way that could prevent the misuse of authority by both the king and officialdom. He believed that the bureaucracy he proposed could remedy the faults of the existing system. Let’s take a look at the system of evaluating officials’ performance (kojŏkche 考績制) and the right to appoint and dismiss officials (kwalli immyŏnkwŏn 官吏任免權) which were the only parts that allowed for the king’s involvement. Chŏng Yagyong commented, on the basis of the “Lidian” (禮典) and “Gaoyao mo” (皐陶謨) chapters of the Shujing and the Zhouli, that the governance of Yao and Shun was possible because of the strict implementation of their system of evaluating officials’ performance. He outlined the evaluation of officials’ performance in the times of Yao and Shun in “Gaoyao mo” as follows: There were three evaluations in total in nine years, and every three years at the Great Assembly, which evaluated officials’ performance, while the high-ranking officials like Yu (禹), Gaoyao (皐陶), and Kui (夔) gathered before King Shun (舜) and mutually evaluated each other.

Chŏng Yagyong proposed to eliminate the practice of not evaluating the performance of central government officials from the third rank and higher (三品), including provincial governors, as stipulated in Kyŏngguk taejŏn, and made all officials including the Three State Councilors subject to assessments of their performance. According to him, the state’s control over the officials would also be strengthened by setting a stricter standard for evaluation. Seen from a structural perspective, the system of official evaluation that Chŏng Yagyong proposed was not carried out under the king’s actual supervision. Because it was stipulated that various divisions mutually evaluate each other according to their rank, ultimately the Úijŏngbu, which was centered around the Three State Councilors, and the Chunch’ubu (中樞府), would together take responsibility for the comprehensive evaluation. For example, the provincial governors evaluated the magistrates, and the Úijŏngbu and Chunch’ubu the provincial governors, while the Úijŏngbu and Chunch’ubu evaluated each other. Ultimately the king’s right to evaluate officials’ performance and to appoint and dismiss officials was reduced to a mere formality amounting to the approval of the already completed institutional evaluations. Setting up Royal Perfection (皇極) as the standard of politics and ethics through his interpretation of “Hongfan”, Chŏng Yagyong argued that the primary requirement for the king was to have a fair mind to be able to select men of outstanding talent when appointing officials. He stressed that the king needed to cultivate the fine virtues of impartiality and harmony in his mind in order to know the officials’

87 “Koyo mo” (堯謨), in Sangsŏ kohun, vol. 2.
88 Relevant Information about the performance evaluation system in this article is based on the “Kojŏkchibop” (考績之法) section of Kyŏngse yup’yo, vol. 4.
89 “Hongfan” (洪範), in Sangsŏ kohun, vol. 4.
worthiness. Even though Tasan arranged his system so that the king did not have any actual role in the performance evaluation or appointment and dismissal of officials, he still stressed that the king should cultivate his inner self under strict standards so that he would be able to appoint excellent officials. Since Tasan did not allow any arbitral action on the part of the king, it seems to have been Tasan's intention to keep his power in check in all respects.

Chŏng Yagyong's watchfulness did not only extend to the hereditary king. He also was alert to the abuse of power by established literati-officials. This is why he proposed to have the scope of the evaluations cover all officials without exception, including the highest ranking ones who previously had not been subject to regular assessments of their work. There existed a different kind of evaluation, not the periodical evaluation of the performance of individuals, but the evaluation of specific reports when they were made. If the Three State Councilors submitted reports to the king, the officials of the Chungch'ubu would be asked to evaluate them, and the reports submitted by the head officer (yŏngsa 領事) and the vice head officer (p'ansa 判事) of the Chungch'ubu would be appraised by the officials of the Ùijŏngbu. The fifth and sixth ranks of officials in the Ùijŏngbu would be directly evaluated by the Three State Councilors, and capital officials below that rank who were affiliated to the Six Boards would be evaluated by the head of the relevant division. Chŏng proposed that high-ranking officials like the vice ministers of the Six Boards be evaluated within the Ùijŏngbu. The further reinforcement of the evaluation system for local officials, such as the provincial governors and the local magistrates, was an innovation proposed by Chŏng Yagyong. He added such performance evaluations of governors to the existing system and made the Ùijŏngbu and Chungch'ubu sit together to evaluate the reviews and reports of the Royal Commissioners and the local military officers according to a five grade system. He believed that performance evaluations of magistrates were a most crucial factor on which the country's safety and stability depended. Thus he proposed that the existing system, with three grades in total, be changed to one with nine grades. The contents of reviews and reports were divided into nine fields including self-discipline, pursuing public affairs, cherishing the people, civil affairs, revenues, rites, war, administration of justice and public duties, with each field subdivided into six items. Thus performance evaluation would be carried out for a total of fifty-four items.

Thus Chŏng Yagyong proposed, without any exceptions, to apply strict institutionalized evaluations and regulations to both local officials and high-ranking central government members. But there seems to be quite a gap between Chŏng Yagyong's advocacy of a “pro-active personality” who actively performs the role given to him and his argument for a society regulated by an intricately structured bureaucratic system. On the one hand he asked the intellectuals of the Confucian society to engage in the autonomous practice of virtue, and on the other hand he asked them to control political ambitions that went beyond their duties. It is doubtful whether he finally managed to resolve the conflict between the two. If

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90 “Ipchŏng” (立政), in Sangsŏ kohun, vol. 6.
we do not idolize a thinker, and simply analyze him as a historical figure, it is not unusual to find conflicting factors mixed together in his thoughts. Perhaps it is this very feature that provides us some clues for interpreting Chŏng Yagyong’s thought from a new angle. 

Conclusion: The Limits and Significance of Chŏng Yagyong’s Political Philosophy
What were both the limits and the significance of Chŏng Yagyong’s political philosophy based on the features of his political writings discussed in this paper? Does his thought retain any relevance for our times? To answer such questions we first have to decide what is the most notable feature of the state governance system he proposed in Kyŏngse yup’yŏ and Mongmin simso. In my opinion, it is the argument for strict hierarchy, together with the rational reorganization of the government system in order to prevent the abuse of state power by anyone at any level of the hierarchical system. However, Chŏng’s reorganization carried the danger of establishing a system of government that was excessively centered on the central bureaucracy.

An even more serious problem is that Chŏng Yagyong took pyŏndŭng as the basic principle of politics. As stated in the preface of Pangnye ch’ŏbon, the rough draft of Kyŏngse yup’yŏ, the state governance system proposed by Chŏng Yagyong put much more emphasis on rites than on laws. But rites in Chŏng Yagyong’s thought are basically utilized to strictly separate different social groups by their social status and to establish a hierarchical social order through the pyŏndŭng system. As illustrated by the sequence of “loving one’s parents” (親親) → “loving all people” (仁民) → “loving all things on earth” (愛物) in the Mencius, Confucian intellectuals believed that courteous behavior toward different members of society should be differentiated according to the relative degree of intimacy. As a Confucian intellectual, Chŏng Yagyong naturally was inclined to think that this kind of hierarchical order was inevitable in human society. His proposal in Kyŏngse yup’yŏ to set up the Bureau of Prohibitions (Kŭmjesa 禁制司) to control impertinent behavior such as overstepping one’s social status is grounded on this kind of belief. He argued that if a government official overstepped his status, it should be reported to the Censorate (Sahŏnbu 司憲府), and if a commoner committed a similar offence, that it should be reported to the Board of Punishment.

91 Boudewijn Walraven, “Tasan’s writings as a Resource for the Historical Anthropology of late Chosŏn Society,” 248-50. Walraven explains that the intellectuals of Tasan’s time were interested in a wide array of ideas which were not part of the Korean orthodox canon, such as Catholicism, the thought of Wang Yangming, or Daoist and Buddhist ideas. Such an intellectual atmosphere would have had an impact on Tasan as well. Chŏng Yagyong’s thought was also profoundly influenced by foreign thinkers such as the Japanese Ancient Learning scholars. For a comparative analysis of Japanese Ancient Learning and Chŏng Yagyong’s thought, refer to the following articles: Mark Setton, “A Comparative Study of Chŏng Yagyong’s Classical Learning and Japanese Ancient Learning,” Tasanhak 3 (2002): 230-45. Also see Chapter 4 of Setton’s Chong Yagyong: Korea’s Challenge to Orthodox Neo-Confucianism and John Allen Tucker, “Chŏng Yagyong and the East Asian Confucian Return to Meaning,” Tasanhak 21 (2012): 246-50.
93 “Kŭmjesa” (禁制司), in Kyŏngse yup’yŏ, vol. 2.
(刑曹 Hyŏngjo), and that such misbehavior should be regulated with strict laws.

In the Mongmin simsŏ, Chŏng Yagyong insisted that regulation of the social order was an urgent matter for the government, and that if there was disorder in the hierarchy, the people would disperse and the discipline of the state collapse. He even spoke negatively about the reform policy on male and female slaves in King Yongjo’s time: “After the reform policy on male and female slaves, the social customs have changed greatly. It is not beneficial to the state at all.”94 Yi Yonghun has harshly criticized Chŏng Yagyong’s insistence on the resumption of the former policy on male and female slaves as well as his criticism of King Yongjo’s chongmopŏp (從母法, the law of deciding one’s social status according to the status of one’s mother) as uniquely conservative attitudes even in his time. Chŏng’s perspective on social status, he judges, is regressive, particularly as revealed in his understanding of pyŏndŏng.95 Part of Yi Yonghun’s criticism is reasonable. But it is necessary to rethink how this issue may be interpreted by considering it within the entire structure of social status conceived by Chŏng Yagyong. A reflection on the political effects of the establishment of a hierarchical social order may offer a more meaningful route for criticism of Chŏng Yagyong’s political views.

Apart from such negative aspects, some positive factors may also be found in Chŏng Yagyong’s political thought. For example, his belief that just and impartial wangjŏng, the fair political system described in Kyŏngse yup’yo, could be realized through his political ideology is significant. He took the realization of a just society where individuals would not be swayed by their private desires as the ultimate goal, and this is still of great significance even today. There often was confusion regarding the relationship of the state and the monarch or the royal family in traditional monarchial societies. Against this historical background Chŏng Yagyong tried to define the king’s hereditary authority as symbolic and institutional, in other words, as public authority. In addition, he also strove to promote the state’s fairness and transparency through an integrated and rational bureaucracy. Whether his methodology would have been effective, if implemented, is another problem that waits to be examined in the future.

Moreover, Chŏng partially embraced the ideology of the “perfect society” (大同社會, society of great harmony) depicted in the “Liyun” (禮運) chapter of the Book of Rites as the ideal community of human coexistence and mutual help.96 As a typical Confucian intellectual, he could have criticized the ideology of the “perfect society” which may remind one of the Mohist School’s ideology of universal love (兼愛說). And most probably he believed that the emotions of filial piety, brotherly deference, and benevolence had to be practiced differently in society according to the degree of intimacy. But even Chŏng Yagyong could not deny the ideology of the “perfect society.” In the “Yukposŏ” (六保署) chapter of Kyŏngse yup’yo, he insisted

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94 “Pyŏndŏng” (辨等); “Yejon yukcho,” in Mongmin simsŏ, vol. 8.
96 The second chapter “Liyun” (禮運), in Liji.
on the importance of the social enterprises of bringing up children, supporting the aged, providing aid for the disadvantaged, resolving poverty in society, comforting the sick, and tempering the desires of the rich.\(^7\) Tasan did stress a differentiated hierarchy through the concept of pyöndung, but he also had, with other Confucian scholars, a deep interest in the issue of creating harmony among all members of society.

Finally, it is necessary to pay attention to Chŏng Yagyong's new argument on human nature. He contended that no virtue could be realized if one did not practice it actively in interpersonal relations. Contrary to the Neo-Confucian ideology that the Four Virtues of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, and wisdom are inborn qualities in our hearts, he stressed that these virtues need to be nurtured through the practice of interpersonal relations.\(^8\) Chŏng Yagyong's views on virtue pushed his political philosophy forward into a positive ideology of “active policies.”

Chŏng Yagyong developed his philosophy in the turbulence of eighteenth-century East Asia, when intellectuals began to take notice of problems such as individual desire and the pursuit of private interest, and became famous for his distinctive thinking on human nature and self-cultivation, which diverged from Neo-Confucianism. We regret that Chŏng Yagyong did not do more to probe into what implications his own unique perspective on human nature might have for the operation of political power and for the Confucian community, as well as for the problems of the mutual relations between humans and institutions, virtue and politics. However, the merit of Chŏng Yagyong's thought as a Confucian intellectual lies not in any specific institution he proposed, but in his insightful observations about and deep understanding of human nature. No matter how detailed Tasan's institutional views on the government structure and the selection of officials are, it is difficult to apply those views to today's system. Yet, Tasan's philosophical insights on human nature, morality, and power clearly illustrate what Chosŏn intellectuals' ideals of human beings and society could be. His worldview can be regarded as helping us to understand the universalities of ethics and politics that Chosŏn intellectuals pursued.

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\(^7\) “Yukposs” (六保署), in Kyŏngse yup’yŏ, vol. 1.

### GLOSSARY

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<td>лешоджон</td>
<td>郑道傳</td>
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Ch'ŏng Yagyong's Political Philosophy: Kyŏngse Yup'yo and Mongmin Sims'o's Arguments on State Governance

yukhyangje 六鄉制
Zhouli 周禮
Zhuzi jiali 朱子家禮

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