

Tasan's Writings as a Resource for the Historical Anthropology of Late Chosŏn Society

Boudewijn Walraven

| Academy of East Asian Studies, Sungkyunkwan University

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I. Introduction

In this paper I intend to consider the work of Tasan with special attention to some of the less obvious uses we may put the huge volume of writings he has left us (which runs to about 500 fascicles, and in a recent modern edition of the texts comprises 37 substantial volumes¹⁾). Not surprisingly, most researchers interested in Tasan have come from the fields of philosophy or intellectual history, but the astonishing variety of the writings of this *homo universalis* is such that he has to offer insights to scholars from quite diverse fields. World-wide it will be hard to find examples of people who at such an advanced level have occupied themselves with so many things, ranging from philological textual criticism, political philosophy, and the practicalities of good governance, to matters such as the construction of bridges and fortifications, the best way to preserve ice for use in summer, or the origins and prevention of smallpox.²⁾ It is not out of place to compare Tasan with a figure like Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), who also was active in many fields (even if they were quite different from the areas in which Tasan excelled), at an equally eminent level. Unlike Leonardo, however, Tasan did not enjoy honor and fame throughout his lifetime. Yet, it can be argued that in the case of Tasan it is exactly because of the vicissitudes of his life, with a period of activity at the centre of the state as well as practical administrative experience in the country-side, followed by many years of enforced leisure away

1) This is the edition compiled by the Tasan haksul munhwa chaedan: *Chǒngbon Yǒyudang chǒnsǒ* (Seoul, 2012). This edition notes textual variants, but contains no annotations, which would have added substantially to the number of volumes.

2) Tasan's writings about smallpox are not quite up to modern medical standards but are nevertheless of interest as a source for ideas about the aetiology of the disease in Chosŏn Korea (Baker 1990).

from the capital while he was exiled or without office, that he was able to bequeath to us such a many-faceted and rich heritage. His activities spanned such a broad area that if we just look at publications in English there is hardly any study of late Chosŏn that does not at least refer to Tasan at some moment or other, whether it is (for instance) about Confucian statecraft (Palais 1996), the military examinations (Park 2007) or the Hong Kyŏngnae 洪景來 Rebellion (Sun Joo Kim 2007), apart from studies that fully concentrate on Tasan such as the book by Mark Setton (Setton 1997). Tasan was not solely interested in prescribing rules that would lead to good government and a better society (although in conformity with the Confucian ideal of the scholar-official this was the ultimate goal of most of his activities), but he would also describe and analyze what he observed, and often disapproved of, and that is exactly why his work contains many fascinating details that allow us a vivid glimpse of life as it was in the Chosŏn period. It is a feature of the contemporary Korean literary world that many works of non-fiction become the basis for a novel and therefore it is not much of a surprise that Tasan's *Mongmin shimsŏ*, too, has been singled out for such treatment, but the fact that the five-volume novel (Hwang In'gyŏng 1992) has sold so well (more than five million copies) and has been turned into a KBS television drama perhaps is not unrelated to the many passages in the original that depict Chosŏn society as it really was, unadorned, with all its contradictions and problems. In any case, such passages offer an abundance of material for anthropologists, who in the past decades have become interested in the past as much as in the present but cannot travel back to the past of Chosŏn to do fieldwork and therefore warmly welcome the colorful descriptions of the social life of that

era which Tasan provides. Hence it is to the uses of Tasan's writings for anthropological research directed at the past that this paper will be devoted.³⁾ Its main purpose is to show how rich Tasan's writing are as a resource for such investigations, not to present an in-depth inquiry into any of the topics mentioned, which would require the use of other available sources as well.

II. Yangban Attitudes to Popular Beliefs and Practices

The approach and focus chosen for this paper stem from my personal experience and, I have to admit, my personal limitations. Not being a scholar of intellectual history, I have mainly been able to profit from Tasan's work while doing research from a historical-anthropological point of view concerning the co-existence of different religious beliefs in the Chosŏn period.⁴⁾ Although initially my primary interest was in shamanic rituals and in recent years I have studied late Chosŏn Buddhism, I have always been intrigued by the fact that in Chosŏn society ways of thinking that are conventionally regarded as totally different and poles apart continued to exist side by side for century after century. It seemed unlikely to me that yangban who grew up in households where in most cases the women were devotees of shamanic or Buddhist cults would be completely unaffected by this, particularly as small children when they were close to their mothers, in spite of the fact that when growing up they would receive years and years of

3) Of course, not only anthropologists can profit from the many concrete details in Tasan's writings, but also, for instance, social historians.

4) From the 1960s the mutual interest of historians and anthropologists in each other's field has steadily grown in momentum and proved fruitful for the development of both fields; cf. Thomas 1963 and Jordanova 2000.

Confucian indoctrination that would equip them with a strong bias against “heterodoxy” (*idan* 異端) and “licentious worship” (*ũmsa* 淫祀). Over the years I have explored areas where the worlds of the common people, women, shamans, Buddhists and Confucian yangban might touch in some way, but also tried to clarify what at first sight similar concepts meant to specific social groups. My first endeavor in this respect was an article about sorcery (Walraven 1980), a topic that as the *Chosŏn wangjo shillok* 朝鮮王朝實錄 attests often raised concern at court, but also vexed ordinary people. While preparing that article, I had not yet discovered the potential of Tasan’s writings as a resource, which at the time was less evident, because it was not yet possible to search in digital databases and one had to make do with indexes of customs prepared during the colonial period. These days a few moments on the internet suffice to discover that in *Kyŏngse yup’yo* 經世遺表 (*kwŏn* 6, *chŏnjego* 田制考6) Tasan mentions sorcery as a weapon oppressed farmers might use against the extortions of the government clerks (which confirms modern anthropologists’ view that sorcery is generally supposed to be the weapon of the oppressed against the powerful⁵⁾). Even without the aid of digital databases, however, in the years that followed I found highly useful information in the writings of Tasan, for instance when studying *yŏje* 厲祭, the government ritual for persons who had died prematurely, and often in a violent manner

5) “Supposed to be,” for it is thanks to the comparative studies of anthropology that we have become aware that in cases of supposed sorcery the real social fact that usually can be established is the accusation that sorcery has been practiced rather than the actual practice of sorcery, as sorcery is supposed to be practiced in secret and evidence therefore hard to obtain. The notorious Chang hŭibin 張禧嬪, consort of King Sukchong, was condemned to die for practicing sorcery, but without a shred of evidence that would be admissible in a modern court of law. Walraven 1980 and 1987.

(Walraven 1993 and 2001). This was a ritual that in its basic conceptualization was very close to shamanic rituals, both kinds of ritual departing from the idea that such spirits constituted a danger to the living, but in its actual practice and from the viewpoint of the elite *yŏje* mainly served to express the paternalistic concern of the king for his subjects and therefore might be considered an instrument and justification of domination. In *Mongmin shimsŏ* 牧民心書 Tasan noted that in its original form as described in the *Book of Rites* 禮記 the content of the *yŏje* ritual was quite different, because at first it only addressed persons who had died without issue. He surmised that the change was due to the influence of Buddhist rituals for wandering ghosts (Chŏng 1961, *kwŏn* 7:16a; Chŏng 2010:437). As also becomes clear in other passages, he was sensitive, therefore, to what nowadays is called “the invention of tradition” (Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983), *i.e.*, the use of assumed historical precedents to justify contemporary practices. The *Book of Rites* in Chosŏn was used to lend legitimacy to the *yŏje* ritual, which a twentieth-century Korean Confucian, somewhat estranged from his own tradition, described to me as “shamanic.”

Had I had the benefit of the digital resources we possess at present, then I would also have included in my article on *yŏje* the passage from *Mongmin shimsŏ* about the first actions a newly appointed magistrate should undertake when assuming office. According to Tasan, he should pay his respects in person to the tablet of Confucius at the local school and to the gods of land and grain at the local Sajik 社稷 altar, and then delegate to a clerk the task of paying respect at the *yŏdan* 厲壇 (where the *yŏje* sacrifices were made) and at the altar of the local guardian deity, the Sŏnghwang 城隍 (Chŏng 1961,

kwŏn 1: 21a; Chŏng 2010: 38). In this way Tasan made very clear what in his eyes were the hierarchy and importance of these places of worship.

Tasan's writings are very helpful for determining yangban attitudes toward popular religious practices and rituals that were performed in both a popular and an official form, a topic I have attempted to address in an article, "Confucians and Shamans" (Walraven 1991-1992) and a book chapter, "Popular Religion in a Confucianized Society" (Walraven 1999). Tasan's attitude is ambiguous, but in its ambiguity quite representative of yangban attitudes in general. In *Mongmin shimsŏ* he presents numerous examples of officials whose resolute and at times violent rejection of "licentious sacrifices" (*ŭmsa*) he warmly applauds (Chŏng 1961, *kwŏn* 7:20b-22b; Chŏng 2010:448-452). Yet, in other places, as also in the passage about the *yŏje*, he makes clear that this does not mean that he totally denies the existence of deities and what we might call supernatural beings.⁶⁾ This can also be seen in his treatment of rain rituals (Chŏng 1961, *kwŏn* 7:22b-26b; Chŏng 2010:452-459). Tasan condemns ways of conducting rain rituals that do not conform to strict standards of propriety (generally because of concessions to popular customs), but in no way questions the need for performing the rituals and expresses a belief in the interconnections between natural phenomena and the world of man that is quite alien to modern views of the cosmos. In his discussion of the rain rituals, he for instance approvingly quotes a tale about Yi T'aeyŏn 李泰淵, a governor of Chŏlla Province, who demonstrated great sincerity in his rain prayers and in this way managed to soothe the wrath of thousands of

6) To speak of the supernatural in Neo-Confucian philosophy is problematic because all phenomena, including deities and spirits, are part of the "natural" order that is constituted by principle, *i* 理, and material force *ki* 氣.

victims of a drowning accident, which had threatened to prevent the timely falling of rain. Tasan also quoted several examples of prayers for rain rituals composed by Chosŏn magistrates, which recommend an attitude on the side of the magistrates of holding themselves responsible for any mishaps. It is a religious attitude that does not shift responsibility to higher powers, but emphasizes both the responsibility and the authority of the government of the visible world, of which the magistrate is the legitimate representative. The magistrates who wrote those prayers also tended to appeal to the sense of responsibility of the deities who were in a way their invisible counterparts, magistrates of the spiritual realm, and as such should show paternal concern for the innocent people.

III. Food culture

In the past decades the study of food history and food culture has become a fast-growing area of scholarly concern for historians (Le Goff and Nora 1974) as well as anthropologists (who had discovered food as a focus of study much earlier).⁷⁾ Here, too, Tasan offers useful information. In a recent study of the introduction of the sweet and white potato in Chosŏn Korea and its cultural implications Felix Siegmund has found evidence in Tasan's *Kyŏngse yup'yo* that the sweet potato fields of Kangjin 康津 (Tasan's place of exile) for tax purposes were rated as high as the best paddy land, but were

7) The literature on the anthropology of food is extensive. Representative examples, illustrating completely different approaches, are the works of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who concentrated on the crucial role of food in the mental constructions of mankind with titles like *The Raw and the Cooked*, and *The Origin of Table Manners*, and the work of Sidney Mintz, who in *Sweetness and Power* explored the enormous impact the production of sugar has had in world history.

ten times as profitable (Siegmund 2010). In other words, the sweet potato must have been very expensive and a great luxury. In the section on the administration of justice in *Mongmin shimsŏ*, Tasan discusses regulations forbidding the arbitrary private slaughter of oxen for their meat. Because the animals were used to draw the plow they were essential to agriculture. Yet, due to the fact that there were hardly any other sources of animal protein (no sheep being kept) this regulation was often ignored. One provincial governor, however, dealt harshly with offenders, treating the slaughtering of a cow in the same way as homicide, reportedly with the result that agriculture in the area under his control recovered (Chŏng 1961, *kwŏn* 10:42b-44a; Chŏng 2010:792-795). Tasan, however, cautions that this measure is too extreme.

Tasan also was sensitive to the symbolic meanings of food that are so dear to the anthropologist. He pays meticulous attention to the composition of the meals the magistrate should have on his way to the place to which he has been posted and the banquet held to celebrate his assumption of power once he had arrived at the place to which he had been posted. The first should be very frugal and consist of nothing more than a basic meal (soup, *kimch'i*, soy sauce and rice) in order not to burden the communities along the road unnecessarily (Chŏng 1961, *kwŏn* 1: 16b; Chŏng 2010:28). The latter should be much more sumptuous, in order to express the dignity of the office (Chŏng 1961: *kwŏn* 1, 19a-b; Chŏng 2010:34). The first might be considered purely practical, but it also expresses the concern of the magistrate for the well-being of the people (which in turn is a reflection of the concern the king has for his subjects). On the other hand, the abundance of the inauguration banquet expresses the respect the people should have for the magistrate who in

a sense is the local stand-in for the monarch. This does not mean that Tasan thought the magistrate should always be served such fine food. Generally, simplicity in food habits, several passages in *Mongmin shimsŏ* indicate, is the mark of a good magistrate (e.g., Chŏng 1961, kwŏn 1:36b and kwŏn 2:16a-b; Chŏng 2010:72 and 115). Conversely, Tasan criticizes provincial governors (*kamsa* 監司) who would rate magistrates on the basis of the food they served him when he came to inspect local administration. Apparently the food to be served to the governor would be a major concern for the governor's hosts and Tasan suggests that preparing special delicacies for him was held to be an effective strategy to receive a high rating (Chŏng 1961: kwŏn 7:29a-b; Chŏng 2010:465-466). Of course, Tasan considered this an abomination.

Mongmin shimsŏ devotes many pages to famine relief (Chŏng 1961, kwŏn 12: 25a-kwŏn 14, 16a; Chŏng 2010:893-974), which of course also has a bearing on food culture. Tasan notes that pine needles and wild herbs can be used as famine foods, but that the latter are unpalatable without salt, with the consequence that in times of hunger salt prices rise (Chŏng 1961, kwŏn 13:26a; Chŏng 2010:946-946). Elsewhere he devotes attention to the details of salt production in the context of a discussion of taxes levied on salt (Chŏng 1961, kwŏn 6:32b-33b; Chŏng 2010:390-392). Characteristically, Tasan also considers the economical angle, noting that in one case salt production was stimulated by a lowering of the tax rate.

IV. Tasan and the “Civilizing Process”

One may argue that the Confucianization of Korea could be regarded as a civilizing process in the sense that was defined by the sociologist Norbert

Elias (1897-1990), who in his approach was close to anthropology (Walraven 1994). Elias pointed out that the development of more complicated networks of human relationships over the centuries resulted in a different way of dealing with human emotions, with generally a tendency to greater self-control in order to restrain, for instance, aggressive emotions that might hamper the functioning of a society characterized by complex figurations of social relations, which required frequent interaction between strangers. This self-control would also be exercised in contexts when it was not immediately needed and would lead to behavior the social elite would regard as “civilized.” It would also result in a type of personality that would not regard itself as the centre of the universe. A “civilized person” would be able to distance himself from private primary desires and be capable of seeing himself as one part of a greater whole, an attitude that is ideal for a conscientious civil servant. For the paper I wrote on this subject I focused on *Sasojŏl* 士小節 (Minor Rules of Etiquette for Literati) by Yi Tŏngmu 李德懋 (1742-1793), but Tasan’s *Mongmin shimsŏ* also furnishes quite an abundance of material that is of interest for the study of the cultivation of self-restraint, beginning with the many pages on disciplining the self (Chŏng 1961, kwŏn 1:27b –kwŏn 2:37b; Chŏng 2010:51-151). Also relevant is the section of the book that immediately follows this, which deals with public service (Chŏng 1961, kwŏn 3:1a-33b; Chŏng 2010:152-188). Altogether many passages in *Mongmin shimsŏ* are about the conflict between private interests and desires (sa 私) and the common weal (kong 公), and of course Tasan always supports the latter when the two are in conflict (e.g. Chŏng 1961: kwŏn 14, 25b; Chŏng 2010:991). Throughout *Mongmin shimsŏ* one finds that Tasan always coun-

sels moderation and self-control and warns against giving in to momentary emotions, all of course in the interest of good government.

V. The Anthropology of Violence

A key question in understanding any society is why and to which extent its members accept to subordinate their own interests to the larger community. The cultural internalization of attitudes and norms that is part of the civilizing process has much to do with this, but additionally conformity to social norms is also, as Foucault realized, enforced by violence, both in its institutional, structural forms and in more overt ways. Generally it is probably correct to say that the overt use of violence decreases as the civilizing process progresses, with the state increasingly monopolizing the use of violence, availing itself more of the threat of violence inherent in the laws and punishments of the system than of actual violence in order to achieve domination and peace. It is remarkable that the government of Chosŏn often was wary of using the force of arms even in cases of insurrection. This it could afford to a certain degree because of the internalized tendency of many subjects to follow authority as long as it could be seen as just and conforming to social norms. The bloody rebellion on Cheju-do in 1901, in the course of which hundreds of Catholics were killed, was put down without real fighting between government troops and the rebels, and the overt violence on the part of the government was confined to the death penalties imposed on a small number of leaders, a pattern also seen in other cases (Walraven 2009). Even so-called rebels recognized the system. Yi Chaesu 李在守, one of the leaders of the Cheju-do rebellion who were condemned to death, in his de-

fense statement proclaimed his allegiance to the crown and considered himself to be a patriot who had done nothing worse than killing the enemies of the state. It is also striking that at the beginning of the rebellion there were no troops on the island to maintain order, although not long before that another revolt had erupted on the island. Of course, the nineteenth century had seen several insurrections in which it came to bloody clashes between the government forces and the rebels (such as the Hong Kyŏngnae rebellion, or the Tonghak 東學 peasants movement), but it is striking that at that time, too, the military preparedness of the government was negligible. Authority (and with that violence) in late Chosŏn was largely institutional and based on a widely accepted ideology that justified it.

At the same time, there was also overt, and sometimes lethal, violence perpetrated by others than the servants of the state. Often the state would severely punish such violence, but not always. Although this was considered to be problematic, violence of this kind might also be condoned by the state if it was motivated by a virtue that was considered essential to the system, such as filial piety. Thus revenge for the death of an unjustly killed father might be forgiven, even though it was in obvious breach of the law (Chin Chaegyo 2013). Of course, there was also violence of a less defensible kind, but this, too, was not always punished. Altogether attitudes toward the use of violence were highly complex and in some cases could not be inferred from the legal codes.

In *Mongmin shimsŏ* Tasan furnishes ample material that may aid our understanding of the complexity of attitudes toward violence and of the limits and flaws of the system that aimed to guarantee a harmonic and peaceable

society. The limits became most obvious in times of extreme hardship. Tasan notes that when famine struck ordinary people who in normal times would be law-abiding and hard-working might resort to robbery. He records that some magistrates would kill such robbers without mercy, but himself advocated more lenient treatment, such as temporary exile to a remote island –a punishment, incidentally, that for people without special means of support or good connections might very well turn out to be fatal (Chǒng 1961, *kwǒn* 14:6b; Chǒng 2010:960-961). Tasan also mentions that because of extreme hunger social harmony would deteriorate to such an extent that in the famine years 1809 and 1814 there was an arson epidemic along the southern coast, with people setting fire to the houses of neighbors who were a little better off and refused to share their food (Chǒng 1961, *kwǒn* 14:7a; Chǒng 2010:961). He relates that in the area where he lived in a span of less than ten days 400 houses were destroyed in this way and that elsewhere the situation was even worse. His description of the situation suggests a state of Durkheimian anomie.

As shown in the last example, *Mongmin shimsǒ*, together with Tasan's handbook on judicial practice, *Hŭmhŭm shinsǒ* 欽欽新書, also throws light on the use of violence by private persons, non-government agents or government agents acting in an unofficial capacity. Such violence was not always perpetrated or instigated by people who were considered to be criminals. Tasan personally observed a case of a boat owner who sold his boat but still was required to pay tax for it (Chǒng 1961, *kwǒn* 6:34a; Chǒng 2010:392-393). He appealed to the authorities, who told him the case would be investigated. A clerk put in charge of the matter demanded a bribe, which the former

boat owner paid. The clerk then disappeared and when the boat owner appealed again to the magistrate the latter threatened him with a fine because he had tried to bribe the clerk. The magistrate said the boat could only be struck off the tax register if the former owner paid a substantial sum, much larger than the tax, as a fine. The boat owner finally decided he would just pay the tax and retracted his protest. This is a good example how institutional might (a form of veiled violence) resulted in the submission of a subject. Tasan of course abhorred this practice, and recorded it to put an end to it, but from the point of view of the anthropologist who wants to understand the daily experiences of ordinary people it is much more than an account of administrative malpractice. It illustrates the practical choices and dilemmas ordinary people were faced with and in particular shows how defenseless people were when officials with institutional power to back them up abused their powers for private gain.

This was an individual case, but Tasan claims often to have observed another example of the threat of institutional violence being manipulated by low-ranking government employees when ships loaded with tax grain were about to set off to transport tax grain to the capital. The ships would be detained in all kinds of ways, sometimes by confiscating the oars, until a bribe had been paid (Chǒng 1961, *kwŏn* 3:30b; Chǒng 2010:184). As in the previous example, in this the authority associated with the government, supported by the threat of violence, was again abused for private profit.

Actual violence was used, if needed, by low-ranking government employees when merchant ships entered a harbor and the merchants refused to sell their wares at very low prices or on credit (Chǒng 1961, *kwŏn* 6:31a;

Chǒng 2010:387-388). Powerful families from the villages along the coast would collude with the authorities, bribing them with abalone and fine fish. Tasan also describes another form of abuse of power by locally prominent families, which subverted an institution that in principle should promote social values. Incompetent magistrates would allow too much freedom to such families to abuse the population within the framework of the community compacts (*hyangyak* 鄉約) which were originally intended to propagate proper morals among the people (Chǒng 1961, *kwǒn* 7:44a-b; Chǒng 2010:495-496). As guardians of morality within these organizations these families would rather use their power to further their own interests at the expense of the common people. In one particular locality the power group related to the community compact would be constantly at loggerheads with another interest group, the literati related to the county school (*hyanggyo* 鄉校). In other words the institutional violence inherent in certain institutions, which if exercised properly by the central government or its representatives might guarantee peace, was at serious risk of being abused by local interest groups.

Tasan was highly aware that such abuses were in essence a pernicious perversion of legitimate state power (and therefore of state violence) and described all kinds of instances of it, some very serious, others seemingly more innocent. In the latter category one might rank the habit of local clerks to exact all kinds of foods and other items that might be used to prepare a feast for the birthday of the magistrate, a goal that some might consider laudable. “They snatch away fish from the fishermen, slaughter the dogs from the villages, take flour and oil from the monks, and take bowls and plates from the potters.” What they also collected, however, was the resent-

ment, *wŏn* 怨, of the people who suffered because of this, Tasan concludes (Chŏng 1961, *kwŏn* 2:10b; Chŏng 2010:103).

Violence of doubtful legality, institutional or overt, might also accompany the inspection tours of provincial governors, officials of very high rank. In *Mongmin shimsŏ* Tasan quotes another work, which is supposed to be by his own hand, to fiercely criticize what actually happened during these tours (Chŏng 1961: *kwŏn* 7:28a-29a; Chŏng 2010:463-465). That book is not extant, however, and one may wonder whether it ever existed. Perhaps it is a ploy Tasan used to distance himself somewhat from biting criticism directed against some of the most powerful officials in the land. The inspection tours are said to involve an enormous entourage and impose a terrible burden on the population. The governor is served with meals that are much too elaborate and slight mistakes, such as adding too little salt to the food or insufficiently heating the quarters of the governor are punished with flogging. Tasan adds a comment to this, in which he concludes that the law should be changed to safeguard the livelihood of the people.

An example of completely unlawful violence, outside any formal structures, perpetrated on behalf of the high and mighty and presumably mostly left unpunished, can be found in the chapter in *Mongmin shimsŏ* that deals with the recruiting of military personnel. Candidates for the military examinations from the provinces who were particularly promising sometimes were beaten up by so badly by hoodlums hired by military officers from the capital that they would be permanently disabled and unable to take part in the examinations. This would give the more effeminate sons of these officers a better chance of passing the examination, even though they would be

much less fit for actual military duties than the candidates from the northern and southern provinces (Chǒng 1961, *kwǒn* 8:41a-b; Chǒng 2010:612).

VI. Conclusion

Taking several topics I have been interested in over the years from an anthropological point of view as my point of departure, I have suggested a number of areas where Tasan has substantial contributions to make. In fact, it is difficult to think of subjects in the study of the history and society of Chosŏn about which Tasan, with his encyclopedic knowledge and wide-ranging curiosity and broad experience, has nothing to say. Recently I have done some work on so-called critical *kasa* (*hyŏnshil pip'an kasa* 現實批判歌辭), songs from the eighteenth and nineteenth century that address the problem of recurring famines, which were partly due to meteorological conditions outside human control, but to a large extent also caused or aggravated by human factors. Only in the process of preparing of the present paper I realized how abundant is the information Tasan provides in the lengthy part of *Mongmin shimsŏ* about famine concerning the complex social mechanisms that undid the efforts to prepare properly for such eventualities and hindered measures to alleviate distress. Studying the *kasa* about the famine-stricken countryside I also became interested in expressions of public opinion voicing protest or disaffection. Again Tasan has something interesting to contribute (Chǒng 1961, *kwǒn* 14:21a; Chǒng 2010:984-985). He relates that thirty Korean miles north of Haenam 海南 there was a rock behind which people would hide when an unpopular magistrate would depart and denounce his abuses. For that reason the parties of the departing magistrate would pass

this rock, which was called “Running Fast Rock” (Chilch’iam 疾馳巖) as fast as they could.

I also missed an opportunity to corroborate my argument with material taken from Tasan’s writings when I wrote about Chosŏn book culture, emphasizing the respect for books (of the right kind) Chosŏn literati had (Walraven 2007b). In *Mongmin shimsŏ* there is a section that is entitled “If the Sound of Reading is Heard from the Hall of State, It Indicates That the Magistrate is a Man of Integrity” (Chŏng 1961, *kwŏn* 1:38b; Chŏng 2010:77-78). The passage first of all is evidence for the practice of reading aloud, a practice that in the global history of reading has been universal, but in the course of time usually makes way for silent reading. In Chosŏn, the practice remained because it was a way to more truly embody the teachings of the sages. According to *Mongmin shimsŏ* it also affected third parties, serving as proof of the magistrate’s respect for ethical principles. In the same section, Tasan also counsels moderation. The magistrate’s reading should not be at the expense of his daily duties. In another section, however, Tasan expresses disapproval of magistrates who only take an almanac with them to their new post and advices them to put many books in their luggage and little else (Chŏng 1961, *kwŏn* 1:13a; Chŏng 2010:19-20). His discussion of the issue reveals both his view of the role of the magistrate and the importance of books in Chosŏn culture and society. Tasan stresses that the magistrate should be able to engage in learned discussions with local literati and instruct students preparing for the government examinations, and how would he be able to do so without books? Collections of poetry would be indispensable to prepare for social gatherings in which the composition of poetry

would be required. Also for many more practical matters, such as debates on the land system, labor services, the administration of justice and military preparations for incursions of barbarians across the border books might be useful.

Perhaps surprising, considering his reputation as a stern, puritanical moralist, is that Tasan also furnishes some telling detail on romantic love and sex (Chǒng 1961, *kwŏn* 1:33b-36b; Chǒng 2010:65-71). It is exactly in his descriptions (in the section on self-discipline) of matters that according to him were unbecoming to a good magistrate that we can get a glimpse of a facet of yangban life of which we know something thanks to the paintings by Shin Yunbok 申潤福, but that in serious writing generally remained unmentioned.

Coda: Tasan studies as an interdisciplinary enterprise

It is clear that Tasan provides rich resources for other disciplines than philosophy or the study of intellectual history. Conversely, in some cases it may be fruitful to study his writings and ideas within the framework of these other disciplines, in order to obtain a fresh perspective on the life and thought of Tasan. One issue that may serve as an example is the matter of Tasan's religious convictions. During a conference that was held at Sogang University in 2011, there was a heated debate whether Tasan should be considered a Catholic believer, particularly during his later years, after he had publicly distanced himself from Catholicism. Basing himself on Tasan's writings, Don Baker has argued that Tasan was an extremely nuanced thinker who was open to recognizing the merits and demerits of any system of thought, but fundamentally stayed within the bounds of Confucian-

ism, even when he advocated belief in an anthropomorphic supreme deity (Baker 1999). If we look at this problem from the point of view of the study of religions in general, and of the study of the co-existence of religions in the Chosŏn period in particular, we must note that at the time, in spite of Confucian claims to hegemony, individuals would not make a radical choice for any one faith. The literate elite would stick to Zhu Xi's Confucian orthodoxy when taking the government examinations or writing official documents, but in private might read a wide array of writings, including Confucian writings that were not included in the Korean orthodox canon (such as the works of Wang Yangming 王陽明) as well as Daoist and Buddhist texts, and find merit of some kind in these works (Yu Hosŏn 2006; Kim Daeyeol 2007; Walraven 2007a). It does not make much sense to label such individuals as exclusive believers in "Confucianism," "Buddhism" or "Daoism." This was the context in which Tasan lived. In some cases his contemporaries chose explicitly to proclaim adherence to Catholicism, or the authorities decided to put this label on them, with fatal consequences. Of the latter, Tasan's nephew Paul Chŏng Hasang 丁夏祥 (1795-1839) was an example. The majority of intellectuals, however, never made such a choice and in the private sphere eclectically shopped around for ideas and practices that suited their personal tastes. Consequently it distorts the mental world in which they lived if one insists on sticking an exclusive religious label such as "Catholic," "Confucian" or "Buddhist" on them. That Tasan belonged to this group with divided interests is strongly indicated by his serious interest in and appreciation for Buddhism which, as Kim Daeyeol of the Institut National des Langues et Civilisations Orientales (INALCO) in Paris has shown in a recent article

(Kim Daeyeol 2012), was in evidence almost during his entire life, from youth till old age, and only relegated to the background during the years when he was in public service. Typically the interest of the Confucian elite in Buddhism was confined to certain aspects of it and would not mean that they did not reject or oppose other aspects (Yu Hosŏn 2006). This also was the case with Tasan. The conflicting statements he made about Buddhism can be more easily understood when his work is not studied in isolation, but within the framework of the history of religion of Late Chosŏn, when Confucianism was *de rigueur* in official, public life (as also is attested in *Mongmin shimsŏ*⁸⁾), but in personal, private life there was ample space for forms of belief and practice that from the official point of view were heterodox.

It has been the tenor of the main body of this paper that Tasan in his writings furnishes abundant resources for students of other disciplines than philosophy or intellectual history. As yet, this resource has not yet been sufficiently explored. As the example given in the previous paragraph has tried to show, in turn these other disciplines may develop insights from which Tasan studies may profit, turning the study of the awe-inspiring heritage of Chŏng Yagyong into a truly interdisciplinary undertaking.

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8) Tasan writes that there may be Buddhist monks who are worth befriending -and actually during his exile maintained close ties with Ch'oŭi Ŭisun 草衣意恂 (1786-1866) and other Buddhist intellectuals- but insisted in *Mongmin shimsŏ* that a magistrate as a public person should not meet them in the official space of the yamen (Chŏng 1961, kwŏn 1:32a; Chŏng 2010:61).

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조선 후기 사회에 대한 역사인류학 자원으로서의 다산의 저술

박우더베인 왈라번 | 성균관대학교, 동아시아연구원

다산의 저술이 우리에게 고매하고 여러 분야에서 뛰어나게 다재다능한 지식인의 사고방식을 통찰하도록 만들어 줄뿐만 아니라, 인류학자와 조선 후기 사회와 문화에 관심 있는 여타 연구자들에게도 유용한 자원으로 기여할 수 있다는 이유에서 본 논문은 다산의 저술이 중요함을 제의한다. 다산은 오로지 바르고 어진 행정과 보다 나은 사회로 이끌어 줄 규칙 설정에만 관심을 국한시키지 않고, 나아가서 그가 일상생활의 관행에서 관찰한 상황을 기술하고 그에 상세한 분석을 가하기도 했다. 그 결과 인류학자들에게는 지극히 흥미로운 막대한 자료를 제공해 주고 있다. 본 논문은 『목민심서』에 초점을 맞추어 다산이 당대 사회 연구에 소중한 자료를 공급해 준 분야들의 구체적인 실례를 제시한다. 언급되는 화제는 민속신앙과 풍속에 대한 양반층의 태도, 음식 문화, (노르베이트 엘리아스Norbert Elias의 정의에 입각한) 문명화 과정, 그리고 폭력의 인류학이다. 끝으로 보다 전통적인 다산 연구 역시도 것처럼 인류학적인 접근을 적용한 그의 저작에 대한 연구에서 이득을 볼 수 있으리라는 시사를 던진다.

주제어 | 다산, 『목민심서』, 문화인류학, 조선 후기의 사회와 문화, 문명화 과정.

Tasan's Writings as a Resource for the Historical Anthropology of Late Chosŏn Society

Boudewijn Walraven

Academy of East Asian Studies, Sungkyunkwan University

This paper proposes that the writings by Tasan are not only important because they allow us to gain insights into the thinking of a great and exceptionally versatile intellectual, but also because they can be used profitably as a resource by anthropologists and other researchers interested in the society and culture of late Joseon Korea. Tasan was not solely interested in setting down rules that would lead to good government and a better society, but would also describe and analyze in detail what he observed in the practice of daily life, and therefore offers an abundance of material that is of great interest to anthropologists. Focusing on *Mongmin simseo*, this paper provides concrete examples of areas in which Tasan furnishes valuable material for investigations of Korean society in his times. The topics touched upon are yangban attitudes to popular beliefs and practices, food culture, the civilizing process (as defined by Norbert Elias), and the anthropology of violence. Finally, it is suggested that more conventional studies of Tasan also might profit from studies of his works that apply such an anthropological approach.

Key Words | Tasan, *Mongmin simseo*, cultural anthropology, late Chosŏn society and culture, civilizing process.