

Revisiting the Tangpyeong Policy of Yeongjo and Jeongjo: Yi Ik and Hong Daeyong's Criticism, Jeong Yagyong's Support, and King Jeongjo's Response

Jongwoo YI

Was the Tangpyeong Policy (the policy of impartiality) justified? Rooted in the Imperial Pivot (Hwanggeuk), the policy, implemented by King Yeongjo and King Jeongjo, aimed to reduce factional strife. However, Hong Daeyong criticized the policy because its political neutrality blurred the distinction between right and wrong, as well as between loyal and disloyal subjects, ultimately leading to disorder in the state. Yi Ik also criticized the Tangpyeong Policy, noting that the emergence of the Tangpyeong Faction (Tangpyeong dang), which supported the policy, resulted in even more intense factional strife. Instead of alleviating political divisions, the policy contributed to the formation of yet another faction, thereby exacerbating the very problem it sought to resolve. Their criticism was directed at the *joje bohap* (balancing and reconciliation) Tangpyeong Policy implemented by Yeongjo. At that time, many scholars also criticized the policy, and Jeongjo voiced his complaints about their criticism. However, he later implemented both *joje bohap* and the *uri tangpyeong* (distinguishing between loyal subjects and traitors). In contrast, Jeong Yagyong supported the policy implemented by Jeongjo and proposed appointing talented individuals even from the lowest social classes. His proposal represented an expansion of Jeongjo's policy, and Jeongjo accepted it.

Keywords: Factional strife, the Imperial Pivot, King Jeongjo, King Yeongjo, *joje bohap*, *uri tangpyeong*, Tangpyeong Faction

Jongwoo Yi (daecho1@hanmail.net) is an assistant professor in the Department of General Studies, Hongik University at Sejong

Seoul Journal of Korean Studies 39, no. 1 (June 2026): 95–117.

© 2026 Kyujanggak Institute for Korean Studies