The First Chapter of the History of Grievances: Danzhu, Baduk, and Sangje's Reordering of the Cosmos in Daesoon Jinrihoe

Thomas MICHAEL

Thomas Michael is Professor in the School of Philosophy at Beijing Normal University. He holds a PhD in History of Religions from the University of Chicago. A specialist in the early philosophy of the Daodejing, he has authored three monographs, including *Philosophical Enactment and Bodily Cultivation in Early Daoism: In the Matrix of the Daodejing* (Bloomsbury Press, 2022), and numerous articles and book chapters. His research also extends to early Chinese shamanism, for which he has also published numerous articles and book chapters. Michael is a frequent presenter at international academic conferences.

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Correspondence to

Thomas MICHAEL

Beijing Normal University

maike966@gmail.com

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Abstract

This study provides a systematic analysis of the central soteriological principle in the Korean religion Daesoon Jinrihoe, namely the Resolution of Grievance (*Haewon*), by tracing its specific mythic origin to the foundational grievance of Danzhu, whose thwarted vision for a harmonious world is identified in Daesoon scriptures as the "first chapter of the history of grievances." It contends that the pervasive cosmic disorder of the "Former World," characterized by "mutual contention" (*sanggeuk*), is not an abstract metaphysical failure but originates from the violent suppression of this specific harmonizing potential. The argument unfolds in a tripartite structure. First, it re-examines the classical archetype of Danzhu, contrasting the orthodox portrayal of a rejected heir inherently aligned with conflict with the Daesoon re-envisioning of a figure whose mastery of Baduk symbolized a profound understanding of strategic harmony. Second, it analyzes his political bypassing as the event that suppressed his visionary model of governance, triggering a catastrophic chain reaction leading to the ignoble death of Shun and the world-altering lament of his wives, Ehuang and Nüying, whose ripple effects corrupted the Three Realms. The article then elucidates the divine response: Sangje's "Reordering Works of the Three Realms" (*Samgye Gongsa*), referring to a fundamental recalibration of the cosmos that targeted the malfunctioning "Degree Numbers" (*Dosu*) of reality. Through a close reading of a pivotal ritual performed by Sangje at the geomantic hub of the "Five Immortals Playing Baduk," this study demonstrates how his intervention resolved Danzhu's foundational grievance by redeeming his thwarted vision. This decisive act not only settled the primordial conflict but made all subsequent historical grievances eligible for resolution, thereby clearing the way for the inauguration of the "Later World," an era of paradise founded upon the principle of 'mutual beneficence' (*sangsaeng*).

Keywords: Sangje; Danzhu; Baduk; *Haewon* (Resolution of Grievance); *Sanggeuk* (Mutual Contention)

Introduction: The Primordial Grievance and Its Cosmic Resolution

The central soteriological principle of Daesoon Jinrihoe is the "Resolution of Grievance" (解冤 *Kr. Haewon* / *Chn. jieyuan*), referring to the cosmic-scale resolution of bitterness and resentment accumulated through ages of conflict. The Korean term for grievance, *won* (冤, Chn *yuan*) is conceptually rich. Its Chinese character depicts a rabbit trapped under a cover (冖), powerfully evoking the sense of being ensnared, impeded, and prevented from realizing one's natural potential or ambitions. Within Daesoon soteriology, grievances are thus not primarily viewed as character flaws but as conditions of entrapment resulting from unjust impediments.

This process of *Haewon* is the stated goal of Sangje's (上帝) "Reordering Works of the Three Realms" (三界公事 *Kr. Samgye Gongsa* / *Chn sanjie gongshi*). Yet, the logic of this resolution remains incomplete without an understanding of what, precisely, is being resolved. The power of Daesoon's soteriology lies in its specific identification of a mythic origin point for cosmic grievance, an event which serves as the root cause of the disorder that is rectified by Sangje, whose full title is "the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven, Celestial Worthy of Universal Creation through His Thunderbolt, the Originator with Whom All Beings Resonate" (九天應元雷聲普化天尊上帝).

This study traces the trajectory of grievance from its genesis to its resolution. It begins by outlining the Daesoon cosmological framework, in which the universe, plagued by "mutual contention" (相克 *Kr. sanggeuk* / *Ch. xiangke*), required Sangje's "Great Itineration" (大巡 *Kr. Daesoon* / *Ch. daxun*) to recalibrate its very foundations. The core of the article delves into the mythic history of ancient China to pinpoint the moment identified in Daesoon scripture as the "first chapter of the history of grievances" (冤史初章 *Ch. yuan shi chu zhang*): the grievance of Danzhu (丹朱), the son of the sage-king Yao (堯). Analyzing this narrative, the paper illustrates how a single political grievance created a toxic legacy, spreading through time to corrupt the Three Realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. Finally, it examines how Sangje's Reordering Works are designed to surgically resolve this primordial grievance, thereby making all subsequent grievances eligible for resolution and clearing the way for a new world order of Mutual Beneficence (相生 *Kr. Sangsaeng* / *Ch. xiangsheng*).

Setting the Stage: Yao's Abdication and the Fractured Ideal

To understand the Daesoon soteriological narrative of a cosmos in need of repair, one must first appreciate the pristine political and cosmic order it identifies as having been shattered. This order is located in the mythic golden age of ancient China, centered on the sage-kings Yao and Shun and the foundational, yet fateful, institution of "abdication" (禪讓 *Ch. shanrang*).

The abdication myth represents an idealized method of royal succession where the throne was passed not by heredity but to the most virtuous individual, ensuring

governance by merit over birth. The core of this myth, as transmitted for millennia, is that the sage-king Yao, recognizing his own son Danzhu's shortcomings, passed the throne to Shun, a man of legendary filial piety. Shun, in turn, later bypassed his own son, Shang Jun, to crown Yu the Great for his monumental service in controlling the floods. This sequence presents a beautiful tableau of selfless governance and perfect virtue, a political ideal that has captivated the East Asian mythic-political imagination.

The classical *Historical Annals* (史記 *Ch. Shiji*) sanctifies this decision, framing it as the fulfillment of a cosmic will: "Yao knew that his son Danzhu was not worthy and was not good enough to give him the world. Thereupon he gave Shun the world. Giving it to Shun, the people of the world would have the benefit of it and Danzhu would be displeased" (Nienhauser 1994, 10). In this reading, Shun is also depicted as having slandered Danzhu in front of Emperor Yao and brought up the negative aspects of their father-son relationship, ultimately leading to Danzhu's exile.

While orthodox histories like the *Historical Annals* present a smooth transition, other sources hint at a more contentious reality experienced on the ground as a profound political and personal upheaval; as Zhan Shichuang notes, "The state ruled by Emperor Yao faced a serious crisis in its later period, and tribal leaders headed by Shun and Yi attempted to usurp Yao's throne" (Zhan 2013, 10). The *Bamboo Annals* (竹書紀年), in fact, records that Shun did not receive the throne through abdication but through usurpation: "When Yao's competence declined, Shun imprisoned him in Pingyang and took his throne. He also restricted Yao's son Danzhu and kept him away from his father" (Nivison 2009, 130).

Thus, the seemingly straightforward abdication narrative contains a fundamental and potent tension. The orthodox Confucian tradition celebrates it as the apex of virtuous governance following Heaven's Will. As Jung Jae-seo writes, "This beautiful story vividly displays before our eyes the scene of an ideal society where propriety and decorum are properly observed" (Jung 2009, 7). Yet, the alternative thread suggests a story of political intrigue, humiliation, and the violent suppression of a rival. According to this version, after his exile, Danzhu allied with the Sanmiao people in the Dansui region in an attempt to realize his own vision of beneficial government, only to be defeated by troops sent by Emperor Shun. A deeply despondent Danzhu ultimately threw himself into the water and ended his life.

This is the fractured foundation upon which the Daesoon narrative is built. The *Canonical Scripture* itself identifies this precise moment as the catalyst for all that follows, stating succinctly: "Yao deemed Danzhu unworthy and gave his two daughters to Shun and abdicated the throne to him. This caused Danzhu to form a grievance" (*Reordering Works* 3:4).

The stage is thus set. There are the key actors: the sage-king Yao, the virtuous successor Shun, and the spurned heir Danzhu. There is the pivotal event: a transfer of power framed as Heaven's Will but experienced as a profound injustice. And there is also the initial consequence: a primordial grievance. The following sections will delve deeper

into the character of the flawed heir, Danzhu, as understood by the classical tradition, and then explore how Daesoon Jinrihoe's soteriology reinterprets this entire mythic sequence not as a political lesson, but as the origin point of cosmic disorder.

The Flawed Heir: The Classical Archetype of Danzhu

Classical texts consistently portray Danzhu through a dual lens of wasted potential and active corruption. The *Book of History* (書經 *Chn Shujing*), which provides the earliest and most authoritative mentions of Danzhu, immediately establishes the core tension that defines his character: a perceived intelligence overshadowed by a fundamentally contentious nature. This duality is introduced where the sage-ruler Yao has his ministers recommend a worthy successor. One of them says, "Your heir-son Danzhu is highly intelligent," but Yao immediately dismisses this, saying, "Alas, he is insincere and quarrelsome" (Legge 1965, 23).

This paternal condemnation is later amplified by Shun, who has bypassed his own son, Shang Jun, to select Yu as his successor. When Yu is soon to be enthroned, Shun advises him using Danzhu as a cautionary tale, saying "Be not haughty like Danzhu, who found his pleasure only in indolence and dissipation, and pursued a proud oppressive course. Day and night without ceasing he was thus. He would make boats go where there was no water. He introduced licentious associates into his family. The consequence was that he brought the prosperity of his house to an end" (Legge 1965, 84). He portrays Danzhu as a paradigm of misrule, defined by haughtiness, indolence, and dissipation. The later portrayal of these events concerning Danzhu in the *Historical Annals* relied virtually word for word on these passages from the *Book of History*.

The ancient Chinese writings established a pattern where Danzhu's natural capabilities are nevertheless nullified by his flawed character that motivated Yao to pass him over. The substance of this flaw is then vividly illustrated through behaviors that symbolize the inversion of order. His indulgence in leisure and his notorious act of "making boats go where there was no water" represent a disturbing waste of resources and a perversion of utility. More dangerously, his act of "introducing licentious associates into his family" shows him actively corrupting the very heart of the social and political unit. Danzhu's seemingly irrational acts and personal vices serve as powerful metaphors for a mind that squanders resources, subverts natural order, and corrupts social harmony. Thus, foreshadowing the event that led to his famed grievance, the historical record paints him as a man who was inherently subject to contention (*sanggeuk*)—wasting what was given, perverting its use, and poisoning his surroundings. Although Daesoon Jinrihoe would reinterpret this characterization, it nevertheless provided the essential raw material for its identification of him as the source of the primordial cosmic grievance.

Beyond the foundational accounts in the *Book of History* and the *Historical Annals*, Danzhu was not a minor, forgotten figure; instead, his portrayal evolved from a specific historical account into a broader and powerful philosophical archetype, primarily

developed as an important case study for discussing problems of heredity, moral cultivation, and the nature of evil.

The *Guoyu* (國語, *Discourses of the States*) places Danzhu at the heart of a classic political dilemma: the "virtuous father and the bad son." Here, King Zhuang is persuading Shi Wei to educate his own crown-price by listing Danzhu alongside other failed heirs like Shang Jun, which he relies on to explore the limits of paternal influence and the unsettling reality that virtue is not hereditary:

> If the crown prince wants good, good people will come. If he does not want good, good people will not be employed. Therefore, Yao had Danzhu, Shun had Shang Jun, Qi had Wu Guan, Tang had Tai Jia, and King Wen had Guan and Cai. These five kings all had great virtues but had treacherous sons. It was not because they did not want their sons to be good, but because they could not. (De Harlez 1895, 191)

Danzhu became established as a standard example in debates about succession. *The Hanshi waizhuan* (韓詩外傳, *Master Han's Outer Commentary on the Classic of Songs*), for instance, records Hu Jianzi reminding his ruler: "My father's virtue was not greater than Yao's, yet Danzhu was exiled" (Hightower 1952, 240). This framing served to absolve the sage-fathers of blame, suggesting that even perfect Confucian virtue could not guarantee a worthy heir.

The theme of an inherent and incorrigible nature finds its most forceful expression in texts like the *Lunheng* (論衡, *Balanced Discourses*) and *Huainanzi* (淮南子), which repeatedly couple Danzhu with Shang Jun to form a diptych of failed succession. The *Lunheng* theorizes that their flaws were innate and immutable, arguing that even the perfect moral influence of their sage-fathers could not reform them. It explains that "Shun admonished Yu not to treat an unworthy son like a son, and to pay attention to the commands of Heaven. He was alarmed, lest Yu should be partial to his son, therefore he adduced Danzhu as an example calculated to deter him" (Forke 1962, 404). The text asserts this inherent corruption directly: "Leading water eastward or westward is like dyeing silk blue or red. Danzhu and Shang Jun were also imbued with Yao and Shun's doctrines, but Danzhu remained haughty, and Shang Jun cruel. The extremely bad stuff they were made of did not take the blue or the red color" (Forke 1962, 380).

Even more forcefully, the *Lunheng* states that "Shang Jun and Danzhu belonged to the same species as Yao and Shun, but in body and mind they were abnormal" (Forke 1962, 367). This conception is brutally reinforced by the *Huainanzi*, which describes both figures as beyond the reach of the Dao, virtue, or any form of instruction or redemption: "Those who indulged deeply in wine and sex, whose conduct was unrestrained, who could not be instructed by means of the Way or taught by the example of virtue, whom a stern father could not correct, whom a worthy teacher could not transform, were Danzhu and Shang Jun" (Major et al. 2010, 774).

Across these writings, Danzhu's primary function is to warn by embodying the

otherwise unthinkable possibility that a flawed nature can be impervious to the best possible environment. The *Lunheng* explicitly states, "Danzhu was haughty, and Shang Jun brutal. Both lacked imperial decorum to such a degree, that they were set up as a warning to coming generations" (Forke 1962, 384). Mencius's laconic comment that "Danzhu was not equal to his father" (Bloom 2009, 105) is less a biographical detail than a moral judgment used to illustrate a point about virtue. The *Shuoyuan* (說苑, Garden of Eloquence) even compares Danzhu to the First Emperor of Qin, where it records Hou Shang's audience with him: "Danzhu was arrogant, perverse, fond of excess, and cared nothing for self-improvement and so in the end was not raised to the throne. But now Your Majesty's extravagances are ten thousand times greater than those of Danzhu" (Henry 2021, 1215)

By the end of the classical period, Danzhu was thus cemented in the orthodox tradition as less a historical figure and more a symbol of intractable moral failure, the very embodiment of an innate, contentious nature. It is this consolidated, negative archetype that Daesoon Jinrihoe dramatically reinterprets, seeing Danzhu not as an inherently bad person, but as the primary victim of a primordial grievance. This pre-formed and philosophically robust figure was perfectly suited to bear the weight of being the source of the cosmic grievance that Daesoon thought would later elevate to a cosmic principle.

The Daesoon Reinterpretation of Danzhu

These portrayals are challenged in the Daesoon narrative: it tends not to see Danzhu as an individual whose inherent character was already aligned with the destructive principle of *sanggeuk* long before his political grievance was formed, but rather as a blank slate wronged by history, and the grievance that overcame him was the result of his being passed over for the throne, not the component reason for it. There is a tendency in Sangje's thought to redeem figures traditionally condemned by orthodox histories, for which Danzhu stands as the enduring exemplar, focusing on the grievance (冤 *yuan)* created by their circumstances rather than on their alleged moral failings.

The classical view of Danzhu as inherently contentious is thus fundamentally re-evaluated in the Daesoon soteriological narrative. He is re-envisioned not as the archetype of *sanggeuk* (mutual contention) itself, but as its primordial vessel. His personal resentment, while profound, is not the core of the issue; rather, his specific, historical grievance is the etiological moment and metaphysical root from which the cosmic principle of *sanggeuk* emanated. Daesoon theology posits that he does not *embody* contention through his active nature, but that the injustice he suffered became the foundational template that corrupted the Three Realms. He is the archetype because his personal condition, through a cosmic chain reaction, became a universal one.

Sangje is recorded as saying:

> After resolving the grievances which all spirits of high treason hold, I will send them all to various stars. Everything is subject to debate over right and wrong, yet stars are the only exception as they are not subject to such debate. As the spirits were unable to achieve their ambitions, Heaven and Earth filled up with their grievances and grudges. People hated their rebellions and stigmatized them as heads of nefariousness, creating a curse name for them: bastard treacherous traitors. This curse word was later applied simply to people who were disliked but did not know the honor of true rebels. Ergo, all the spirits of high treason dislike this insult with great intensity. Therefore, I cannot help but send them to the stars where there is no right or wrong among all creations. As for sky, there is a dispute between sunrise and sunset. As for earth, there is a dispute between fertile and barren soil. As for weather, there is a dispute between flood and drought. As for wind, there is a dispute between tailwinds and headwinds. As for the seasons, there is a dispute between cold and heat. Only in stars are there no disputes and no mutual contention. (*Dharma* 3:6)

The import of this it to show that Sangje as a thinker was quite well known for challenging popular assumptions about history and for wishing to resolve the grievances of figures who had been disparaged as "bad/evil."[1] As it is said, "the winners write history," and Sangje was reticent to uncritically believe what history said about "losers." This suggests that in most cases he likely considered their grievances to be legitimate, at least to some extent. As Cha Seonkeun writes, "The worldly record that Danzhu was unfilial should be interpreted in two directions. One is that since records are written from the winner's standpoint, Shun, who became king, was distinguished as a sage, and Danzhu, who did not become king, was distinguished as a foolish figure. From Danzhu's position, this biased record would be detestable, but we do not believe Danzhu's capacity was so small as to create a grievance powerful enough to shake human history over this level of slander" (Cha 2002, 21). Lee Gwang-ju writes:

> Although not found in the *Canonical Scripture*, examining the transmitted records of the Sangje's deeds and words reveals that He evaluated Danzhu completely differently from the records in the *Book of Documents* or the *Historical Annals*. That is, although Dan Zhu suffered the stigma of being 'unworthy' for five thousand years, he was actually very intelligent and wise, and he worked tirelessly day and night to harmonize even the barbarian tribes of the Four Seas. Thus, Sangje evaluated him as a great figure who tried to realize a true world of great unity, which even Yao and Shun could not achieve, making the world like one family. If Danzhu was such an outstanding figure with grand ideals, not only was his dream thwarted, but the resentment stemming from receiving the disgraceful reputation of being unworthy for so long must have been extremely profound. (Lee 2002, 3).

This stands as the fundamental separation between the Confucian and Daesoon

understanding of Danzhu, according to which, from the Confucian perspective, the expression "the grievance of Yao's son Danzhu" is unacceptable. Yao handing over his throne to Shun was the will of Heaven, hence the will of the people. How could Danzhu dare feel something like injustice? Against this, Choi Dong-hee writes, "The records of Yao, his son Danzhu, and Shun cited from the *Historical Annals* conceal within them a Sinocentric view of history, state, and Confucianism. However, our people, throughout our long historical process, could understand and critique these records in our own way. Thus, it can be said that Daesoon Jinrihoe's understanding of Danzhu embodies our people's worldview. But in fact, Daesoon Jinrihoe's unique religious perspective is situated here" (Choi 2009, 17).

While Daesoon Jinrihoe, according to Jung Jaeseo, "acknowledges the Yao-Shun abdication, it greatly highlights Danzhu's role as a victim in the process… The claim that the starting point of all human misfortune lies in the victimization of Danzhu, while acknowledging the fact of the Yao-Shun abdication, expresses its injustice and implies that there was a great violent reality which caused deep resentment between Shun and Danzhu… The Yao-Shun abdication myth is an ideological narrative concealing a violent reality woven by Confucian idealism and Mohist philosophy of elevating the worthy, and the reality was a transfer of kingship through force" (Jung 2009, 10).

In an initial exploration of the cause of Danzhu's resentment, Cha Seon-geun (2002, 2–3) presents a progression of important perspectives on the cause of Danzhu's resentment.

> The Early Mainstream Interpretation: Danzhu's grievance stemmed from a personal sense of injustice over being passed over for the throne and being unfairly labeled as "unfilial." This view was the initial, dominant Confucian interpretation, directly based on Sangje's words that "Danzhu was deemed unfilial, so Yao passed the world to Shun, and Danzhu harbored grievance."
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> Park Yong-cheol's Interpretation: Danzhu's grievance was not necessarily the first in human history, but it was the pivotal one that allowed grievances to begin accumulating instead of being resolved. He argued that before Danzhu, the principle of Mutual Beneficence was dominant, so grievances could be resolved. During Danzhu's time, the cosmic principle shifted to Mutual Conflict, causing grievances to become entrenched and accumulated.
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> Ahn Jong-woon's Interpretation: Danzhu's grievance was the first grievance recorded in history, not the first grievance to ever exist.
>
> Jung Jae-seo and Zhan Shichuang's Interpretation: The conflict was not just political but involved a violent usurpation of power by Shun. Danzhu's grievance resulted from being a victim of this power struggle. His grievance stemmed from being a wronged prince whose father was overthrown and who was himself exiled.

> Choi Dong-hee's Interpretation: Since there was no hereditary monarchy at the time, Danzhu could not have simply expected the throne. Therefore, his grievance must have had a deeper, political cause. He proposed that the grievance arose from a fundamental conflict with the ruling power, writes that Danzhu's grievance was likely due to a "pioneering critical consciousness" and "tenacious resistance" against the entrenched ruling system of the tribal chiefs.

This progression shows a deepening analysis, moving the cause of the grievance from Danzhu's individual character to the broader political and historical context of the power struggle between Yao, Shun, and the tribal factions of the time.

This brings us to the game of Baduk.

Baduk as Cosmic Symbol: From Contention to Resolution

Within Daesoon thought, and as understood by masters of the game, Baduk is far more than a simple contest. At its highest level, it embodies the principles of balance and mutual beneficence (*sangsaeng*) that define the Later World.

Baduk is a board game in which one player drops a black stone on a gridded board and the other player drops a white stone. On the surface, the intent is to capture the other player's stones and surround more territory. When the board is complete, the total stones captured and territory surrounded by each player is counted, and the player with the highest score is declared the winner. Thus, if black is ahead by nine points, white is behind by nine points, and when the total gains and losses of the two players are summed, the net result is zero.

However, there is a mirror side to Baduk that masters of the game celebrate as one of mutual beneficence between the players, which relates to the strategic depth and aesthetic qualities that make Baduk unique. In this view, the concept of "mutual beneficence" is understandable not as "zero-sum" but rather as "positive-sum," since the total payoff is greater than zero, meaning that both players benefit from the interaction. The complexity, depth, and aesthetics of the game often lead people to discuss its strategic beauty and cultural value, which aligns with an idea of shared benefit.

Thus, as to the question of whether Baduk, either as a board game or as a cosmic symbol, is a tool of mutual contention or mutual beneficence, the answer is that it is both, but on different levels. The highest-level play is not about total annihilation, but about efficient and harmonious resource management, and it is this side of Baduk that Daesoon thought strongly emphasizes. Based on my own lifetime of experience with the game, the concept of mutual beneficence can be seen to manifest in several key ways.

First, the most efficient way to secure territory is to create groups that are "alive," meaning that they are permanent "houses" that cannot be assailed. The most elegant and stable house formations arise when the stones of both players achieve life in close proximity, but there is no central, ruling house; instead, in a balanced game, multiple

houses harmoniously co-exist. Skilled players prefer sequences where their houses live in a settled manner, allowing the game to progress to other areas, thereby benefitting both players by reducing uncertainty and conserving mental energy. This point is especially important to grasp in understanding the relation of Danzhu with Baduk, because the harmonious, living structures Danzhu learned to create on the Baduk board were a direct metaphor for the political order he sought to enact: a world of multiple, co-existing "houses" in a state of mutual beneficence, rather than a single centralized and dominating power.

Second, there are moves called "*sente*" that requires a response from the opponent. The goal of many sequences is not simply a local advantage, but to gain sente, because it allows one to drop a stone elsewhere on the board. A sente sequence benefits both players, because making the move allows one player to drop a stone anywhere elsewhere on the board, while it also allows the other player to get a small benefit in terms of local stability. It is a form of turn-based beneficence that drives the flow of the game.

Third, in the early and middle game, players are not necessarily attempting to capture the other's stones, but rather to claim the most valuable, uncharted areas of the board. In this way, the game is a parallel exploration where both players collaboratively lay out the framework for the developed game. If one player takes this corner, the other player takes that one; influence on one side is met with an analogous opposite influence on the other. The players are, in a sense, performing a shared dance of spatial expansion in coordinated harmony with each other.

Finally, overplaying a dropped stone in an excessively aggressive move that attempts to gain too much will inevitably result in a dire situation where a skilled player will turn it against the other player by using the aggressor's over-extension strength against them. Therefore, good play requires knowing the limits of your position and taking what it rightfully offers, while allowing your opponent to do the same. This respectful, balanced approach leads to a better game for both. Pushing a slight advantage into a desperate, all-or-nothing fight as a stark expression of outright contention introduces unnecessary risk for both parties.

In these ways, a completed Baduk board results in both a winner and a loser as well as the canvas revealing a work of art completed by two interacting spirits. It manifests both a strategic process and a philosophical and aesthetic endeavor. Daesoon strongly emphasizes the artistry of the final demonstration of the integral interplay of the black and white houses and their flowing expressions as the manifestation of the spiritual state of the players in a harmonious relation of mutual beneficence. Therefore, to truly understand Baduk, one must appreciate both its zero-sum nature as well as its spirit of mutual beneficence. They are not contradictory but are the two essential, intertwined strands of its essential *geist*. Daesoon thought elevates the game from conflict to a high art form by the principles of balance, efficiency, and mutual respect that guide the play of masters. Baduk becomes a primary tool for creative resolution, not contention.

It is this profound potential for harmony that makes Danzhu's relationship with the

game so tragically ironic. Classical sources, such as the *Bowuzhi* (博物志, *Record of Broad Matters*), record that Yao, because he was already concerned about Danzhu's character, invented Baduk[2] as a pedagogical tool for his son, hoping its strategic depth would cultivate in him the discipline, foresight, balance, and wisdom required of a ruler. According to Zhan Shizhuang and based on his study of Daesoon tales, "Danzhu was very intelligent and wise, so under the teaching of his father Emperor Yao, he studied the game of Baduk in detail and became the best Baduk player of his time" (Zhan 2013, 11).

The classical view of Danzhu as contentious is severely at odds with the Daesoon emphasis on grievance resolution. The nuance is that Daesoon theology reframes Danzhu as a victim whose unmet ambitions opened the way to systemic corruption, although he was not an active agent of conflict himself. We may thus ask if Danzhu embodies "mutual contention" (*sanggeuk*), but the answer is not a simple yes or no. Because his grievance is the origin point, he becomes the archetype of *sanggeuk*'s consequences, not its intentional embodiment. Daesoon thus shifts the focus from his character to the cosmic impact of his unresolved resentment: it holds not that Danzhu is a morally evil agent of contention, but that his unresolved grievance is the causal origin and metaphysical embodiment of the cosmic principle of *sanggeuk*. Therefore, the logical conclusion from the *Canonical Scripture* is inescapable: Danzhu's grievance is the primordial instance and metaphysical root of the "mutual contention" (*sanggeuk*) that corrupted the Three Realms. He embodies it not through his active, evil nature (though the classical texts support that), but because his specific, historical grievance is the etiological moment for the cosmic state of contention. He is the archetype because his personal condition became a cosmic one.

Daesoon thought holds that Danzhu mastered the mechanics of Baduk while absorbing its higher moral purpose grounded in mutual beneficence. That is, he mastered the mechanics of conflict illustrated by the capturing of stones and the surrounding of territory, but he also mastered the deeper strategy of harmony, balance, and resolution. He saw both the *sanggeuk* and *sangsaeng* the within the game.

Within the Daesoon scriptural interpretation, Yao taught Danzhu Baduk as a way to resolve grievance, so his mastery of it is therefore not a minor biographical detail, but the definitive manifestation of his inner alignment with *sangsaeng*. The element of *sanggeuk* was not absent, but he learned to temper it with compassionate strategy. It was this admixture that led Yao to decide on his unsuitability for a rulership based on *sanggeuk* that downplayed *sangsaeng*, justifying Yao's decision to bypass him.

Within the Daesoon soteriological narrative, the classical portrait of Danzhu as an incorrigibly contentious heir is fundamentally overturned. Rather than a flawed individual, he is re-envisioned as a tragic visionary, whose profound grievance originated not from a flawed character, but from the violent suppression of his political philosophy of harmony and inclusion. This reinterpretation, powerfully articulated by scholars like Cha Seon-keun, paints Danzhu not as a villain but as a pioneer whose integrative and equitable model of governance was tragically ahead of its time. His grievance was thus

the direct result of a thwarted political revolution, a reading that aligns perfectly with the Daesoon objective of resolving grievances by addressing profound historical injustices, not personal failings.

To understand Danzhu's positive character, one must first appreciate the political context of the Yao-Shun era. This was a period of aggressive imperial expansion, where the culturally advanced central state sought to bind surrounding tribes into a unified system. However, as historical records indicate, this unification was achieved through a rigid "master-servant relationship," institutionalized by Shun. He founded his state rule on a system of punishments—exile, beatings, and execution—to enforce submission. Furthermore, he systematically erased local identities, forcing tribes to abandon their unique musical standards, weights, measures, and calendars in favor of those dictated by the center. This was a civilizing mission, but one backed by the threat of coercive force. The record that many states refused to submit to this model testifies to the resistance this coercive model engendered.

It is against this backdrop of centralized control that Danzhu's alternative vision emerges. According to the *Book of History* and the *Historical Annals*, when Yao first asked his inisters who should be chosen, the first name formally recommended was in fact that of Danzhu, and this for his intelligence and capabilities. Daesoon thought builds upon this, interpreting his character as possessing a "balanced political sense."

While Danzhu agreed that the benefits of advanced civilization, including flood control technologies and cultural development, should be shared with surrounding tribes, he fundamentally opposed the coercive, hierarchical model. His conception was to unite the center and periphery as one, not through domination, but through a more harmonious and equitable relationship, and this embodies the central feature of Baduk with the formation of multiple "houses" co-existing in close proximity. This aligns with his documented connection to the Sanmiao tribe, a group that fiercely resisted Shun's assimilationist policies. While orthodox histories vilify this association as rebellion, the alternative tradition recognizes that Danzhu went to care for people suffering from an epidemic, suggesting that he was a figure who aligned himself with the plight of the marginalized. He was, in essence, an advocate for the weak, someone who could understand the position of the ruled rather than solely the perspective of the rulers.

Danzhu's grievance, therefore, was not the petulant disappointment of a spurned heir. Its substance was far deeper and more systemic. He needed to become king to enact his visionary political line that was based on a governance model that sought to reduce oppression and build a truly unified world without the use of intimidating force. The tragic irony is that the person who blocked this vision was his own father, the sage-king Yao. Yao, bound by the practical necessities and limitations of the "Former World," judged that the swift, force-backed civilizing mission was the only viable path. He chose Shun as his successor precisely because Shun would reliably execute this established political line. In doing so, Yao inadvertently became the agent who frustrated his son's pioneering attempt to leap over the era's limitations.

This reinterpretation profoundly reframes the meaning of Danzhu's famed mastery of Baduk. No longer merely a symbol of a contentious nature, the game becomes the arena for his unrealized potential. Where the classical narrative claims he mastered only the game's mechanics of conflict, the Daesoon view suggests that he engaged with its deeper, strategic complexities. Baduk, at its highest level, is not about annihilation but about efficient resource management, strategic patience, and creating a harmonious, living structure between opposing forces. Danzhu's proficiency in this art can be seen as a metaphor for the very skills needed to execute his political vision: the ability to balance competing interests, to secure life and stability for all "houses" on the board, and to find a resolution that benefits the whole system. Yao's gift of the Baduk board, then, becomes a tragically apt symbol: it was a tool containing the principles of harmony Danzhu wished to enact, yet it became the substitute for the actual throne that would have allowed him to put those principles into practice.

Thus, from the Daesoon perspective, Danzhu's grievance is the primordial instance of a cosmic-scale frustration. It was the lament of a harmonizing will that was prevented from manifesting, a vision of *sangsaeng* that was suppressed by the prevailing *sanggeuk* of its time. His story is not one of personal failure but of unfulfilled potential on a civilizational scale. This positive portrayal makes him a worthy and sympathetic vessel for the foundational grievance that Sangje's Reordering Works must resolve. By understanding Danzhu as a visionary advocate for the weak, his grievance becomes the key that unlocks the salvation of all subsequent grievances, clearing the way for the Later World where his thwarted dream of unity without domination can finally be realized.

The Genesis of Grievance: A Chain Reaction of Cosmic Disorder

Within the Daesoon soteriological narrative, Danzhu's political bypassing marks the critical juncture for the actualization of cosmic disorder, representing not the flaw of an individual but the definitive triumph of the *sanggeuk* model over his visionary *sangsaeng* alternative. While classical histories present Yao's choice as necessary for good governance, Daesoon Jinrihoe identifies this moment as the fateful genesis point where a harmonious potential was aborted, initiating a self-perpetuating chain of cosmic dysfunction.

In this reinterpretation, the ignoble death of the sage-king Shun and the subsequent tragic fate of his wives, Ehuang and Nüying, are not separate tragedies but the first effects of the fatal ripples caused by the suppression of Danzhu's harmonizing will. The toxic reverberations of this thwarted vision would swell to engulf Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. By examining this foundational myth, this section traces the precise etiology of the cosmic disorder, not as the product of a single man's resentment, but as the systemic consequence of a cosmos choosing contention over beneficence, that necessitated Sangje's Reordering Works.

To understand the gravity of this rupture, one must first appreciate the pristine

cosmic order it shattered. Daesoon cosmology absorbs a mythic sequence of sage-rulers that establishes the political background within which it locates the origin of grievances. It begins with the Three Augusts: Fu Xi, Sui Ren, then Shen Nong, who ruled when the world was emerging from primordial chaos. They were followed by the Five Emperors: Huangdi and Zhuan Xu, then Yao, Shun, and Yu, which led into the long period of dynastic history beginning with the Xia, Shang, and Zhou. These beginnings of human civilization marked a Golden Age for human flourishing. The earliest cultural works of the sage-rulers included not only the political order that they established, but also the various discoveries (like the musical notes) and technological inventions (like houses) that would provide material comfort and physical security, leading human society into an era of spiritual and emotional well-being. Under these ideal conditions, the grievances experienced by humans were spontaneously resolved.

Daesoon thought locates Danzhu's grievance through the employment of a precise temporal framework that divides time into vast cycles: a *hoe* (會 *Chn hui*, 513 years), a *tong* (統 *Chn tong*, 1,539 years or three *hoe*), and a *won* (元 *Chn yuan*, 4,617 years or three *tong*). *The Canonical Scripture* identifies the period from the Yellow Emperor through Yu the Great—the era of Yao and Shun—as the first *hoe* of the first *tong*, a unique epoch where "all rulers were sages" and where cosmic and political harmony were one; it states:

> The Yellow Emperor took the throne in the Jeongsa year 4,617 years ago. All signs and enterprises lie in him. Every law and document originated from him as well. The knowledge of astronomy, geomancy, and humanities was first taught by the emperor. And this was also the beginning year of the *Book of History*. The throne was succeeded by Shaohao, Zhuanxu, Di Ku, Emperor Yao, Emperor Shun, and Yu the Great, in that order. All rulers were sages during the first *hoe* of the first *tong*. It took about 500 years from the Yellow Emperor to Shun and Yu. As it changed to the middle and last *hoes* of the first *tong*, sage-rulers were not in succession, and even had they been, it would only have been temporary. After Yu the Great, there was King Tang, and after King Tang, there was King Wen. The world has been gradually corrupted ever since the middle *tong*. The sages have been unable to implement the Dao but transmitted teachings just the same. (*Progress of the Order* 2:26).

This sequence of rulers establishes a critical tension: while leadership passed among a related lineage, the exceptions of Yao-to-Shun and Shun-to-Yu created a new, non-hereditary precedent just before hereditary succession was permanently established by Yu. The Daesoon reading locates the cosmic catastrophe precisely here, in the space between these two models. Yao's fateful decision is seen not as choosing virtue over vice, but as choosing one political future, namely Shun's expansionist, master-servant model, over another, namely Danzhu's integrative, harmonizing model. Danzhu's grievance is thus that of the violent closing of a potential path toward *sangsaeng* at the very dawn of

recorded history. This rejection is the foundational grievance whose cosmic reverberations initiated the period that Daesoon recognizes as the Former World primarily characterized by mutual contention. This single deviation from the harmonious order disrupted the era before Danzhu, when the principle of mutual beneficence was the major trend and the principle of mutual conflict was a minor trend, so even if humans experienced hardship and held grievances, they could be resolved. Thus, events surrounding and following Danzhu's grievance introduced the toxic element that would go on to corrupt the Three Realms.

In the classical writings, the stories relating to Danzhu begin when Yao is searching for an appropriate successor to his throne. After rejecting one minister's suggestion of Danzhu, other ministers recommended Shun, who had a reputation for outstanding filial piety. The *Historical Annals* picks up on this and states: "Yao said, 'I will try him'. Thereupon Yao married his two daughters to him and observed his kind deeds with respect to the two daughters" (Nienhauser 1994, 8). Yao then tasked Shun with a growing number of royal duties to test him, which he performed to a superlative degree.

The *Historical Annals* states that, after Yao passed away, "Shun yielded his position to Danzhu but the world all came to Shun." It then gives a detailed explanation of this situation:

> After Yao had been enthroned for seventy years, he obtained Shun. After twenty years he stepped back from his duties because of age and ordered Shun to take charge of the administration of a Son of Heaven, recommending him to Heaven. A total of twenty-eight years after Yao abdicated the position, he passed away. The families of the hundred cognomens were as sorrowful as if they had lost their parents. For three years no one in the four quarters played music in order to commemorate Yao. Yao knew that his son Danzhu was not worthy and was not good enough to give him the world. Thereupon he gave Shun the world. Giving it to Shun, the people of the world would have the benefit of it and Danzhu would be displeased. If he gave Danzhu the world, then the people of the world would be displeased and Danzhu would have the benefit of it. Yao said, "In the final analysis, I will not displease the people and benefit a single person." And, in the end, he gave Shun the world. After Yao passed away and the mourning period of three years was over, Shun yielded to Danzhu by going to the south of the Southern He. Of the lords, those who would have audience with the king would not go to Danzhu but would go to Shun; those who were involved in legal disputes would not go to Danzhu but would go to Shun. Those who would praise the king in song would not sing about Danzhu but would sing about Shun. Shun said, "This must be the will of Heaven." Only after this did Shun come back to the capital and accede to the position of the Son of Heaven there. (Nienhauser 1994, 10–11)

The *Historical Annals* then states that Shun provided Danzhu a territory where he "could offer sacrifices to his ancestors and fulfill his duties" (Nienhauser 1994, 16).

However, its account does not give much information about Shun's death, only saying that "he traveled south to inspect local governments and passed away in the fields of Cangwu" (Nienhauser 1994, 16).

This account from the *Historical Annals* underscores the profound political and personal humiliation inflicted upon Danzhu. It vividly depicts Shun as a paragon of virtue, even ceding power temporarily to his rival, and it demonstrates the legitimacy of his rule since "the world all came to Shun." Despite his diplomatic gesture of yielding, the ensuing universal acclaim showered on him publicly and definitively validated Yao's judgment while rendering Danzhu a sovereign without subjects. This transfer of power was a cosmic-scale rejection that transformed Danzhu's personal disappointment into a settled, public fact supported by the totality of his rejection, providing the necessary fuel for a resentment that would grow to cosmic proportions. The narrative further emphasizes that this outcome was "the will of Heaven," thereby sanctifying the very decision that, in the Daesoon reading, introduced a fatal flaw into the cosmic order. Thus, the world's choice of Shun over Danzhu, while politically sound on the surface, becomes the very action that poisoned the Three Realms.

The cosmic repercussions of Danzhu's grievance were immediate and catastrophic, extending far beyond his own political isolation to claim the first in a chain of victims. The Daesoon interpretation posits that the "will of Heaven," which had publicly affirmed Shun's rule, soon manifested in a tragically inverted form. According to the *Historical Annals'*s terse account, Shun died of illness while on a southern tour of inspection. While this seems a natural death, its context, far from the capital in the remote, wild frontier of Cangwu, renders it, within classical norms, an ignoble and improper end for a sage-ruler. For Daesoon's soteriological narrative, this geographical and narrative incongruity is not a coincidence, and Shun's untimely death is reinterpreted as the direct karmic consequence of the cosmic imbalance unleashed by Danzhu's grievance. The virtuous Shun thus becomes the primary victim of the "mutual contention" (*sanggeuk*) that the grievance unleashed, his death serving as the catalyst for the next tragic link in the chain: the profound lament of his wives, Ehuang and Nüying.

Commonly referred to as the "Xiang River Consorts" (湘妃, *xiangfei*), the *Historical Annals* account makes no mention of the fates of Ehuang (娥皇) and Nüying (女英), even though their stories are one of the most famous tales of marital loyalty in Chinese lore. They were celebrated in foundational texts like the *Lienü zhuan* (列女傳, *Biographies of Exemplary Women*) and immortalized in numerous poems and folklores such as the "Jiu Ge" (九歌, "Nine Elegies") of the *Chuci* (楚辭, *Songs of the South*) and in classical songs and guqin pieces such as "Xiangfei Yuan" (湘妃怨, "Lament of the Xiang Consorts").

However, their profound grief did not end with their deaths; it was eternally inscribed upon the world. Upon learning of their husband's death far to the south, Shun's two wives immediately set out to find his resting place. Their journey was filled with profound grief, and as they traveled, they are said to have wept so bitterly that their tears

stained the bamboo on their path along the Xiang River. In the Chinese cultural imagination, the tears of Ehuang and Nüying created the famous "tear-stained bamboo" or "Xiang Concubine bamboo" (湘妃竹 *Chn xiangfei zhu*). Their sorrow was so potent it literally altered the flora, making the mottled bamboo one of the most resonant symbols of tragic loyalty in East Asian history. For Daesoon Jinrihoe, this event is both poetic metaphor and theological evidence, since potent human emotions, especially when unresolved and born of profound injustice, are not merely psychological events. They manifest as tangible blockages in the flow of cosmic energy (氣 *Chn qi*), literally altering the physical and spiritual landscape and disrupting the harmony between the Three Realms.

The tragedy of the Xiang Concubines and the resulting transformation of the bamboo signify the tangible, systemic corruption of the Earth Realm, thus providing a vivid demonstration of how Danzhu's primordial grievances had metastasized into a cosmic toxin.

This Daesoon reinterpretation transforms a political succession story into the origin point for a comprehensive soteriology. Rather than symbolizing an "original sin" inherited by all individuals, as in the Genesis narrative, the story of Danzhu reveals "grievance" as a contagious force that infects the very fabric of the Three Realms, locking Heaven, Earth, and Humanity in a cycle of imbalance. In this way, the grievance harbored by Danzhu became a seed, forming new grievances with Shun and his two consorts. They, too, likely harbored their own grievances towards others. As this vicious cycle repeated over generations, the seeds of grievance spread throughout the world. The misfortunes arising from this gradually intensified, threatening the very fabric of the cosmic order.

This interpretation powerfully illustrates the Daesoon concept that grievances are not isolated events but cosmic toxins that ripple through time, causing entanglement, misfortune, and further grievances. The story of Yao, Danzhu, Shun, and his wives becomes the archetypal example of how a single grievance can corrupt history itself. This reading even casts a shadow of complicity on the sage-king Yao himself, as the *Yuejushu* (越絕書, *Book of Accounts of Yue*) critically notes: "Yao has the reputation of being an unfeeling father. Yao's heir Danzhu was arrogant and proud, he had the heart of a wild beast, and Yao knew that he would never be capable of the task of rulership. Therefore, he set the claims of Danzhu aside and passed the world to Shun. This is what is called: 'Yao has the reputation of being an unfeeling father'" (Milburn 2010, 136).

The tragic suicides of Ehuang and Nüying are the definitive proof of a cosmic contagion. Yao's choice, while politically prudent, directly triggered the chain of cosmic dysfunction, beginning with Shun's ignoble death and his wives profound lament, that constitutes the "first chapter of the history of grievances." This precise etiological narrative is what makes the myth indispensable, for it provides the specific, flawed moment in cosmic history that Sangje's Reordering Works are designed to resolve.

Divine Intervention: Sangje's Reordering of the Cosmos

Having identified the primordial grievance of Danzhu as the catastrophic origin point of cosmic disorder, the Daesoon soteriological narrative turns to its necessary resolution: Sangje's "Reordering Works" (公事 *Kr. Gongsa* / *Ch. gongshi*). This divine intervention, specifically targeting the "Degree Numbers of the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth" (天地公事之度数), constitutes the central cosmological and soteriological process of Daesoon Jinrihoe. Its purpose is to surgically address the root cause of the Former World's suffering—the accumulated grievances from eons of "mutual contention" that have corrupted the Three Realms. The most immediate effect of this recalibration is the Great Opening (開闢 *Kr. Gaebyeok* / *Ch. kaipi*), which paves the way for the "Later World's paradisiacal land of immortals" (後天仙境 *Kr. Hucheon Seongyeong* / *Ch. houtian xianjing*). As the *Canonical Scripture* declares,

> Sangje, who came down to this world to rectify both Heaven and Earth, immaculately reconfigured the Degree Numbers. Therefore, when the correct time has been reached, a new foundation shall be opened. (*Prophetic Elucidations* 16)

Sangje Himself articulates the necessity and scope of this intervention with utmost clarity:

> In the Former World, as all creations were ruled by the principle of mutual contention (*sanggeuk* 相克), grievances and grudges have been accumulating, condensing, and filling up the Three Realms. Heaven and Earth, losing the constant Dao, are overwhelmed with all kinds of disasters and calamities, and the world has fallen into wretchedness. To save all the people in the world, I will resolve the grievances and grudges accumulated from time immemorial by recalibrating the Degree Number of Heaven and Earth, harmonizing divine beings, and establishing the Later World's paradisiacal land of immortals which will be based on the principle of mutual beneficence (*sangsaeng* 相生). (*Reordering Works* 1:3)

This mission is not one of maintenance but a fundamental re-founding of the cosmic order, which the *Canonical Scripture* explicitly defines:

> The Reordering Work of the Three Realms refers to the Great Opening (*Gaebyeok*) of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind. This Great Opening means not to imitate what others have already made but the creation of something perfectly new. It has never existed in the past or the present, and it is not inherited from others, nor do these works belong to destiny. They could only have been created by Sangje, Himself. (*Prophetic Elucidations* 5)

The term *Gongsa* (公事) itself encapsulates the scope and nature of this divine intervention. Etymologically, it is a compound of *gong* (公), meaning "public," "just," or "cosmic," implying something not private or personal but of universal, common concern, and *sa* (事), which has the meaning of "work," "affair," or "task." Thus, although *Gongsa* translates most accurately as "Public Works" or "Cosmic Works," the translation "Reordering Works" is more precise in the Daesoon context, as it captures the active, corrective process of rectifying a broken universe. Theologically, *Gongsa* refers not to maintenance but to the fundamental divine activity performed by Sangje during his "Great Itineration" (大巡 *Kr Daesoon* / *Chn daxun*). This was a prolonged period of intervention where he diagnosed and treated the root illness of the cosmos: the systemic accumulation of "grievances" (冤 *Kr. won*/ *Ch. yuan*) that had led to its profound disorder.

According to Sangje, "The world has been filled with grievances and grudges because mutual contention has prevailed over human affairs in the Former World. Accordingly, the Three Realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind have been obstructed from contacting one another, which has led this world to wretched calamities. This is the reason for the lack of renewal of the Three Realms" (*Prophetic Elucidations* 8). Taking account of this diagnosis, Sangje's Reordering Work operates simultaneously on all three levels of the universe—Heaven, Earth, and Humanity—to achieve a comprehensive resolution because, as he says, "If Heaven drops rain and dew insufficiently, grievances are sure to pervade into all directions. If Earth provides water and soil insufficiently, grievances are sure to pervade into all things. If Humanity shows others virtue and nurture insufficiently, grievances are sure to pervade into all affairs" (*ACTS* 3: 44).

The *Canonical Scripture* provides powerful insights into this tripartite operation. In relation to Heaven, it "rectified the celestial harmonies," recalibrating the malfunctioning rhythms of nature to end the cosmic imbalances that lead to natural disasters. For Earth, the process healed the terrestrial realm, reinstating fertility and resolving the grievances stored in the very fabric of the world, purifying the energy of the land itself. Most critically for Humanity, it targeted the historical and personal grievances that are the root cause of conflict, illness, and suffering. As Sangje says, "If even one person conceives a grievance, the energy of Heaven and Earth will suffer a blockage" (*Reordering Works* 3: 29). The Reordering Work aims to remove these blockages at their source, restoring the proper circulation of beneficent energy between all three realms.

The concept of "Degree Numbers" (度數 *Kr. Dosu* / *Ch. dushu*) is not a Daesoon invention but an adaptation of a classical Chinese cosmological principle. In traditional East Asian thought—particularly within Daoist and correlative cosmology—the universe is understood to operate according to precise, quantifiable patterns. The movements of celestial bodies, the succession of seasons, and the destinies of human beings were all seen as governed by these inherent cosmological "numbers" or cyclical rhythms. The term itself is revealing: *Do* signifies a "degree," "measure," or "standard," a defined

parameter within a system, while *Su* means "number," "calculation," and by extension, the numerological principle governing fate and timing. Daesoon theology adopted this concept but gave it a critical soteriological twist: in a universe corrupted by mutual contention, these very Degree Numbers had become misaligned and blocked. They were not merely abstract patterns but the specific, malfunctioning settings of a broken cosmos, which Sangje's Reordering Works were designed to recalibrate.

This framework of Reordering Works and Degree Numbers transforms the myth of Danzhu from an ancient tale into a tractable cosmological problem. Much more than a metaphor, it situates a specific point of corruption in the cosmic code—miscalibrated Degree Numbers that Sangje's intervention must locate and reset. Resolving Danzhu's grievance in the process of forgiving a historical figure is even more about identifying the root blockage in the flow of cosmic energy and recalibrating the system to its pre-grievance settings, thereby making all subsequent, derivative grievances eligible for resolution.

Consequently, the "Degree Numbers of the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth" represent the precise methodology of Sangje's Great Itineration. This was an active, technical campaign of cosmic repair. His Reordering Work can thus be understood as a tripartite process of divine intervention. It began with a comprehensive diagnosis, where he identified the specific points of blockage and imbalance within the cosmic system—the corrupted "code" of reality itself. This was followed by the core act of recalibration, where he adjusted these fundamental Degree Numbers, restoring their original, harmonious settings. This act can be likened to a divine engineer rewriting the corrupted source code of the cosmos to eliminate the foundational errors introduced by primordial grievance.

The final and ongoing operation is rectification: the restoration of the free flow of beneficent energies throughout the Three Realms. By first fixing the root setting of the Degree Numbers, Sangje made the entire system capable of sustaining a new, harmonious state. The ultimate goal of this entire process is the definitive closing of the Former World of contention and the Great Opening of the "Later World's paradisiacal land of immortals," instantiating a new cosmic era founded irrevocably on the principle of "Mutual Beneficence" (*sangsaeng*).

The Decisive Act: Resolving Grievance at the Five Immortals

The theoretical framework of Gongsa and Dosu finds its most profound and precise application in a specific Reordering Work that targeted the root of cosmic disorder itself: the grievance of Danzhu. More than a recalibration of abstract numbers, Sangje performed a divine intervention that directly engaged with the symbols and sites of the primordial grievance, demonstrating how the Reordering Work surgically reverses the toxic legacy of mutual contention at its origin point.

This intervention was encapsulated in a potent Reordering Works ritual, which the

Canonical Scripture presents in the following:

> Sangje had Jang-Geun make a pot of sweet rice drink. Early that night, He poured the drink into a large bowl and put it under the straw bell. He said, "I will redirect the destiny of Joseon (Korea) by attaching the Degree Number for the grievance resolution related to Danzhu, the progenitor of the Baduk game, and to the hub of earth-energy at Mount Culture-Returning (Hoemun-san) known as "the Five Immortals Playing Baduk." One of the five immortals is the host and just stands by idly. The four have divided themselves into two teams and are trying to compete against each other intensely. As their time is just being wasted, the winner has yet to be decided. Thus, I am going to ask Choi Suwun (Choe Je-u) to be a witness in order to decide on the winner. This sweet rice drink is being served for Suwun" (*Reordering Works* 2: 3).

In this Reordering Work, Sangje had his disciple prepare a pot of sweet rice drink, which he placed under a straw bell. He then declared his intent: "to redirect the destiny of Korea by attaching the Degree Number for the grievance resolution related to Danzhu… to the hub of earth-energy at Mount Culture-Returning." This act connected the medium of a ritual offering (the sweet rice drink) with the specific geomancy of a site (Mount Culture-Returning) that embodied the very nature of the problem. The sweet rice drink, often used in rituals to sweeten or resolve bitter energies, can be seen as the symbolic vehicle for the recalibrated "Degree Number"—a concrete, beneficent energy offered to replace the bitter, contentious energy of the grievance stored at that geomantic hub. This site was crucial to reorder because it was exactly the place where the Five Immortals were locked into "mutual contention" over a Baduk contest which had become locked in a time-wasting stalemate in which no winner could be decided.

This Reordering Work can be more fully grasped with another passage in which Sangje discusses the Five Immortals; he says:

> The present situation of the world is like that of the Five Immortals Playing Baduk. Two immortals are competing while two others advise them. One more immortal is the host and will be unable to offer advice to either side and will instead look on with folded hands and concern himself only with matters related to the hospitable reception of his guests. So long as there are no major flaws in the banquet or any deficiency of hospitality, the host has fulfilled his responsibilities. After the match is over, the board and stones should be returned to the host. (*Prophetic Elucidations* 28)

Thus, Sangje explicitly interpreted the "Five Immortals Playing Baduk" (五仙圍棋 *Kr.* Oseon Wigye / *Ch.* wu xian wei qi) as a metaphor for the stagnant, contentious, and stalemated state of the world. This configuration perfectly mirrored a cosmos trapped in futile sanggeuk: a contest with no resolution, wasting time and energy, while a potential

unifying principle (the host) remained disengaged. The host immortal represents the blocked or neutralized energy of the Earth itself—the geomantic foundation capable of harmony but rendered passive and ineffective by the endless game. Sangje's ritual purpose was to "decide on the winner," but this was not to crown a victor, only to end the match itself by resolving the foundational grievance that fueled it, at which point the board would be returned to the host. By extinguishing the root of this cosmic conflict, the very reason for the four immortals' struggle vanishes, allowing their energies to be reintegrated into a harmonious whole and freeing the "host" to fulfill its proper role in a renewed cosmos.

The stagnant stalemate depicted in the image of the Five Immortals is analogous to the cosmic impasse created when Danzhu's vision for a more integrated and equitable world was suppressed by Yao and Shun's model of centralized control and subjugation. The resistance of peoples to this coercive model, which Danzhu embodied, created a cosmic stalemate. The resolution of this stalemate through violent suppression, rather than through Danzhu's proposed harmony, is what unleashed the violent chain of sanggeuk throughout the world, for a people cannot beneficially exist under subjugation.

This cosmological interpretation of the Five Immortals finds a powerful resonance in modern Korean history, as Greenberger and Lee write:

> In the Korea of 1907, military conflicts with China and, to a lesser extent, Russia were a distant, yet familiar, historical recollection, whereas skirmishes with France and America were more forefront. Most menacing of all were the recent treaties that saw Korea fall further and further into Japanese control; even to the extent of having become a protectorate of Japan two years prior. For Daesoon Jinrihoe, the teachings that inspired the painting titled *Five Immortals Playing Baduk* likens the Korean Peninsula to a Baduk board (but) the Baduk board frequently becomes a representation of the entire world. In the center of the painting Five Immortals Playing Baduk there lies the Baduk board itself, and around it sits a disengaged host representing Korea and four engaged players: two competitors and two advocate-strategists. All four of the engaged players represent foreign powers. In scripture, it is additionally revealed that among the four players, the winner's victory is not particularly meaningful and everything is returned to the host—the true winner. (Greenberg and Lee 2021, 88, 101)

This modern geopolitical reading demonstrates the enduring symbolic power of the myth. Yet, in the context of Sangje's Reordering Works, the "Five Immortals" configuration transcends a single historical moment. It represents the enduring cosmic condition born from Danzhu's primordial grievance: a world stalemated by futile contention, awaiting the divine resolution that would return the board to its rightful host, which stands as a metaphor for the cosmos itself being returned to a state of harmonious sovereignty.

This motif reflects Korea's historical position among powerful neighbors. In this

reading, the disengaged "host" immortal represents Korea itself, patiently awaiting the conclusion of a futile contest understood as "mutual contention" (sanggeuk) between foreign powers (the four competing and advising immortals) over the Korean peninsula, symbolized by the Baduk board. This layered symbolism demonstrates how the Daesoon narrative of primordial grievance and its resolution encompasses not only the cosmic and mythic realms but also provides a framework for understanding historical and national suffering, promising a divine resolution that restores rightful ownership and ends futile strife.

The choice of Choi Suwun (崔水雲, known by his name *Kr.*-Choe Je-u) as witness is deeply significant. As the founder of Donghak (Eastern Learning), a 19th century Korean religious movement that sought national and spiritual renewal, his presence bridges Korea's indigenous religious heritage with Sangje's cosmic intervention. By summoning this particular figure, Sangje simultaneously secures a witness while also incorporating and validating Korea's entire prophetic lineage into the Reordering Works, demonstrating that the resolution of primordial grievance retroactively redeems and incorporates even the "failed" or martyred messianic efforts of the past into its salvific framework. Choi Suwun, himself a martyr executed by the state, represents the culmination of Korea's spiritual struggles now being addressed and resolved through Sangje's cosmic realignment. The choice of Choi Suwun as a witness powerfully connects Korea's struggle to the cosmic narrative. However, it also highlights the vast scope of Danzhu's primordial grievance. Where Choi Suwun's messianic mission sought to protect the weak and renew a single nation, Danzhu's thwarted ambition represented a failed revolution for the entire human and cosmic order—a vision to establish sangsaeng at the dawn of history, making his grievance the foundational template for all subsequent historical and national sufferings, including Korea's.

The choice of location for this Reordering Work also was not arbitrary, as the following passage makes clear:

> Sangje practiced the Reordering Works to pull the essential energy out of each place. He began to undertake the work of extracting the essential energy from the parent mountains in order to unify the essence of energy of every mountain and river. He said, "The parent mountains are Mount Mother (Moak-san) in Jeonju (Perfected Territory) and Mount Culture-Returning (Hoemun-san) in Pure Prosperity (Sunchang). There are 24 hubs of earth-energy in Mount Culture-Returning, one of which is the configuration of the Five Immortals Playing Baduk. The game, Baduk, was devised by Yao, who taught Danzhu how to play the game. The resolution of Danzhu's grievances starts from the configuration of the Five Immortals Playing Baduk. The great fortune generated from the resolution will be opened and spread throughout the world. (*Reordering Works* 3:6)

Sangje identified the "Five Immortals Playing Baduk" as one of 24 vital hubs of earth-energy on Mount Culture-Returning. He began the work of "extracting the essential

energy" from this and other "parent mountains" to unify the energy of the land. By referring to Yao's invention of the game and Danzhu's mastery of it, Sangje directly links this geomanic operation to the mythic past involving Danzhu and Baduk by saying that "the resolution of Danzhu's grievances starts from the configuration of the Five Immortals Playing Baduk." Here, the symbol (Baduk), the historical actor (Danzhu), and the cosmic principle (*sanggeuk*) are united in a single geomantic form, which Sangje's work sought to dismantle and purify. It shows Sangje attacking the problem at the level of its physical manifestation in the landscape. As Cha Seon-geun writes,

> The decree for Danzhu's grievance resolution designed by Sangje was attached to the Oseonwigi Cave ("Cave of the Five Immortals Playing Baduk"), and according to the manifestation of that cave's energy, the national fortune of Korea would be turned, the great fortune would open, and Danzhu's grievance resolution would be achieved. The fact that for Danzhu's grievance to be resolved, the energy of the Oseonwigi Cave must manifest, turning Korea's national fortune and the great fortune revolving, indicates that Danzhu's grievance holds the same meaning as the symbol of the Oseonwigi Cave and must be interpreted interlocked with the Oseonwigi Cave works. (Cha 2002, 8)

Sangje's own words leave no doubt about the cosmic significance of this specific Reordering Work; he says:

> One day in the seventh month, Sangje remarked, "Through this Reordering Work, I will resolve the grievances that have accumulated since time immemorial. I will remove all inauspiciousness resulting from grievances and thereby enable the realization of eternal peace. The grievance of Danzhu, the son of Yao, lies in the beginning of human history and marks the first chapter of the history of grievances. If that grievance is resolved, all subsequent grievances accumulated throughout history can gain eligibility for resolution. This is like leading the head to make the body follow. Yao deemed Danzhu unworthy and gave his two daughters to Shun and abdicated the throne to him. This caused Danzhu to form a grievance, which, in turn, caused Shun to die at a river near Cangwu County, and Yao's two daughters (wives of Shun) drowned themselves in Xiaoxiang River. This was the root grievance that entangled the world continually, generation after generation and caused Heaven and Earth to overflow with grievances and reach the brink of near disaster. Consequently, as I endeavor to rescue humanity from this state of destruction, I must undergo this Reordering Work of Grievance Resolution" (*Reordering Works* 3: 4)

This long but powerful passage serves as the ultimate summation of this article's thesis. It confirms Danzhu's grievance as the "first chapter," it outlines the destructive causal chain that stemmed from it, and it positions Sangje's intervention as the necessary, targeted solution to this primordial error in the cosmic code. Sangje's recitation of the

historical record ("Yao deemed Danzhu unworthy") reports the foundational event but does not endorse its moral judgment. From the soteriological perspective of the Reordering Works, the true significance of this event is not Danzhu's alleged personal failings, but the cosmic consequence of rejecting his political vision.

Danzhu's grievance was the cosmic lament for a lost opportunity to establish a world-order based on sangsaeng. His dream was of a world where Badukian "houses"—from the family to the nation to the world itself—could coexist in mutual beneficence, governed without using intimidation and punishments, and where the distinction between center and periphery would dissolve. Instead, his rejection cemented the Former World's paradigm of power-domination, locking the energies of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity into the very stalemate of sanggeuk depicted by the Five Immortals, a condition leading to universal suffering, catastrophe, and the accumulation of resentment. Danzhu's dream was one that could only be realized when a new world opens through Sangje's works of renewal. Cha Seon-keun writes:

> Danzhu held a grievance over failing to make a weak and small nation like our nation become a superior nation. In other words, based on the works to resolve Danzhu's grievance performed by Sangje, since Danzhu's grievance resolution depends on the rising national fortune of a small, weak nation in the East becoming a superior nation, the substance of Danzhu's grievance ultimately lies in his failed attempt to prevent a weak and small nation from being sacrificed to surrounding powerful nations, to preserve it, and furthermore, to make it a superior nation. (Cha 2002, 8)

Pursuing and continuing this line of thought, Choi Dong-hee writes,

> This unique Haewon does not merely refer to some historical event. It is, above all, a term expressing humanity's astonishing religious destiny. For example, it does not mean that Yao's son Danzhu harbored personal resentment due to a crime he himself committed. Rather, it means the injustice Danzhu fatefully suffered despite having committed no crime himself. Therefore, it is said that if Danju's grievance is resolved, the grievances accumulated over thousands of years since then will be completely resolved. We must deeply understand this unique meaning of Haewon Sangsaeng religiously. This term Haewon means "freely releasing humanity from oppressed lives." In other words, it means "guaranteeing human freedom." Thus, "enabling humans to live autonomously together" is Sangsaeng. As such, the religious meaning of Haewon Sangsaeng is "guaranteeing human freedom, enabling humans to live autonomously together." This is precisely the ultimate wish desired by 20th-century humanity. (Choi 2009, 15)

Thus, the ritual at Mount Culture-Returning stands as the exemplary case of the Reordering Works in practice. It demonstrates the movement of Sangje's soteriology from diagnosis to treatment: he first identifies the specific geomantic site and symbolic

activity that crystallized the primordial grievance, then performs a precise ritual-geomantic act to recalibrate its Degree Number. By resolving the grievance at the "Five Immortals Playing Baduk," Sangje did not just settle an ancient score. He declared the game of sanggeuk over. In ending the futile contest, he returned the board and stones to their rightful host, simultaneously resolving the cosmic blockage, historic grievance, and geomantic stagnation in a single divine act. This is the moment the energy of the Former World was unlocked, clearing the way for the new world of sangsaeng to emerge.

Conclusion: From Primordial Grievance to a World of Beneficence

Sangje descended to resolve the grievances and bitterness that cause cosmic and human disorder, averting a world-ending catastrophe. The disorder of the Former World was not an abstract condition but originated in a specific, resonant human story: the primordial grievance of Danzhu. It is this powerful specificity that gives Daesoon's central soteriological principle—the Resolution of Grievance (解冤 *Kr.* Haewon / *Ch. jieyuan*)—its unique force, by rooting cosmic salvation in a precise etiological narrative.

This study has traced the trajectory of this grievance from its genesis to its resolution. Moving beyond the classical portrayal of Danzhu as inherently contentious, we have examined the Daesoon re-envisioning of him as a figure whose harmonizing potential, symbolized by his deep engagement with Baduk, was tragically thwarted. His political bypassing and the consequent frustration of his *sangsaeng*-oriented vision for a more integrated world acted as the cosmic toxin. The ripple effects, manifest in the tragic deaths of Shun and his wives, Ehuang and Nüying, corrupted the Three Realms, leading to the state of profound imbalance Sangje describes: "The world has been filled with grievances and grudges because mutual contention has prevailed... Accordingly, the Three Realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind have been obstructed from contacting one another" (*Prophetic Elucidations* 8)

In response, Sangje's Reordering Work represents a fundamental recalibration of cosmic history, addressing not just a historical injustice but the very point at which the cosmos was coded for contention over beneficence. By targeting the Degree Numbers of Heaven and Earth, Sangje engaged in a technical campaign of cosmic repair aimed at the root error. As illustrated by the profound ritual at the Five Immortals Playing Baduk, his intervention located and resolved the foundational grievance of Danzhu (understood as the suppression of a harmonizing will), thereby making all subsequent grievances eligible for resolution. This act was the decisive turn from a path of *sanggeuk*, clearing the way for the new world of *sangsaeng*—a cosmic era of mutual beneficence characterized by unblocked communication between the Three Realms, spontaneous fertility, and the end of the historical entanglement wrought by grievance.

This study demonstrates how a deep-seated mythic narrative provides the necessary etiology for a comprehensive modern soteriology. The story of Daesoon Jinrihoe is one of a cosmos healed from its root, where a divine engineer recalibrates a primordial

miscalibration to open a new world founded on mutual beneficence. In doing so, it offers a compelling model for how a religious movement can construct a soteriology by re-interpreting a shared mythic heritage. It demonstrates that the concept of a "fall" is not monolithic; it need not be articulated as a hereditary "sin" but can be powerfully re-envisioned as a contagious "grievance," understood as a historical and cosmic injustice arising from the thwarting of a harmonizing potential. The soteriology of Daesoon Jinrihoe does not seek to save humanity from a fallen ancestor, but to heal the cosmos from a historical wound. By recasting Danzhu from a flawed heir into a visionary martyr, it provides a uniquely hopeful etiology: the root of all cosmic suffering is not original sin, but a rectifiable historical injustice. This provides a valuable comparative case for scholars of cosmology and salvation narratives.

Conflict of Interest

No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Notes

[1] I thank Jason Greenberger for this insight in a personal communication.

[2] An article from Cybero (Jung 2016) introduces three separate theories about the origins of Baduk, and the first one states, "There are no precise records remaining in official history regarding when, where, or how Baduk began. However, the representative theory accepted is the 'Yao and Shun Creation Theory,' which states that around the 24th century BC, Emperor Yao and Emperor Shun created it to enlighten the foolishness of their princes, Danzhu and Shang Jun. The records below are the representative evidence cited when saying Baduk was created 4,500 years ago. 'Yao created Baduk, and Danzhu was good at it' (*Bowuzhi*) and 'Yao and Shun used it to teach their foolish sons' (*Zhongxingshu*, Book of the Restoration)."

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