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Aims and Scope

The *Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia (JDTREA)* is the official English language journal of the Daesoon Academy of Sciences, and thus far, it is the only peer-reviewed, English language journal dedicated to not only research on the contemporary relevance of East Asia Religions, but also to research on the relatively new fields of East Asian New Religious Movements (EANRMs) and Daesoon Thought. Although there is a reasonable level of worldwide familiarity with the major religious traditions of East Asia, misunderstandings are still common, and novel research on these movements remains highly beneficial. As for EANRMs and Daesoon Thought, both are profoundly under-researched outside of East Asia. As a remedy to this, the Daesoon Academy of Science (DAOS), aims to publish *JDTREA* twice a year and hold conferences on East Asian religions and Daesoon Thought such as the World SangSaeng Forum and the *JDTREA* Conference. Daesoon Thought refers to a grouping of native Korean religious concepts best characterized by the Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence (*Haewon Sangsaeng*) and the Grateful Reciprocation of Favors for Mutual Beneficence (*Boeun Sangsaeng*); two concepts that can be traced back to the religious figure, Kang Jeungsan. The editorial board of *JDTREA* consists of active scholars from over a dozen countries including Australia, Bulgaria, Canada, China, France, Japan, Korea, Lithuania, Netherlands, Poland, Russia, Spain, Taiwan, the UK, and the USA. *JDTREA* is published to promote global studies on East Asia religion and Daesoon Thought by encouraging wide-ranging research on these topics. The scope of *JDTREA* includes the following:

- Interpretation and analysis of religious phenomena in all fields of the humanities and social sciences
- Comparative research on the above in relation to another religion, philosophy, ideology, etc.
- Critical reviews of academic trends, mainly in the arts and humanities, that relate to East Asian religions and/or Daesoon Thought
- New interpretations of and approaches to East Asian religions and/or Daesoon Thought

The types of publications featured in *JDTREA* will include original articles, research notes, and book reviews. Other types of contributions are negotiable but subject to the approval of the editorial board. All unsolicited articles will be subject to peer review, and commissioned articles are reviewed by the Editorial Board.

About the Journal

JDTREA debuted on September 30th, 2021 with volume 1, issue 1. The journal is set to be published twice annually and special editions may also be published in the future. The number of copies printed will be 500 per publication. The full texts will be freely available at www.jdre.org. No publishing costs will be incurred by authors who submit to the journal.

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

Carole M. CUSACK
The University of Sydney

The fifth volume of *Journal of Daesoon Thought and the Religions of East Asia* continues the tradition of featuring research—both specific and comparative—on the Korean new religion of Daesoon Jinrihoe which is contextualised in the broader religious landscape of East Asia.

This issue contains seven articles, and unusually six of these concern aspects of Daesoon Jinrihoe, with only one that examines a different new East Asian religion, Tenrikyo from Japan. This study forms a hinge between the two blocks of three research articles on Daesoon Jinrihoe. The first block are studies that primarily address theological ideas and the establishment of the religion.

The first article is by Thomas Michael (Beijing Normal University), "The First Chapter of the History of Grievances: Danzhu, Baduk, and Sangje's Reordering of the Cosmos in Daesoon Jinrihoe." This research investigates the doctrine of the Resolution of Grievances with reference to the primordial resentment of Danzhu, the spurned son of the sage-king Yao, in classical Chinese texts. Danzhu is associated with conflict and is a master of the board game Baduk; when he is passed over politically and Shun announced as Emperor Yao's successor, Danzhu's grievance causes the virtuous Shun's death and the cosmic lament and suicides of his wives, Ehuang and Nüying. Michael relates this Chinese tale to Sangje's teaching on the resolution of grievances, arguing that this doctrine in fact resolved Danzhu's specific grievance.

The second contribution is María Vardé's (University of Buenos Aires) "Spirituality as Resistance: Daesoon Jinrihoe and the Creative Revitalization of Native Thought in Korea." This article situates Daesoon Jinrihoe as an anti-colonial religion that exhibits resilience and creativity in the context of Korean modernity. Vardé argues that Daesoon Truth's position in modern Korea is one of reconciliation and ecological awareness. This is compared to the Andean festival of Quechua people and foreign pilgrims trekking into the mountains (over 4,600 meters above sea level) to attend a multi-day festival dedicated to the Lord of Qoyllurit'i, a miraculous image of Christ painted on a rock on the mountainside.

Next is Ko Namsik's (Daejin University) "Kang Jeungsan's Edification through Literature: A Reinterpretation of Jeungsan's Edification Cases through a Multidisciplinary Theoretical Framework," which considers the founder of Daesoon Jinrohoe, Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909) and his literary practices. The dissemination of religious material in written form is a long-recognised strategy, yet this case is distinctive, given the range of literary genres - including classical Chinese poetry, didactic verse (*Donghak gasa*) and incantatory formulae (*jumun*) – used by Kang Jeungsan. Ko's methodological lens is primarily educational, and the study is a solid piece of research.

The hinge between the two three article blocks on Daesoon Jinrihoe is Midori Horiuchi's (Oyasato Institute for the Study of Religion, Tenri University, Japan) article, titled "The Tenrikyo Teaching of 'No Distinction Between Male and Female Pines' and Present Society: Proposing Gender Equality Based on Tenrikyo's Teachings." This is a fascinating piece that takes Tenrikyo's foundation by a woman prophet, Nakayama Miki (1798–1887) to argue for a feminist—or at least, gender neutral—understanding of the contemporary world. Nakayama Miki posited trenchantly that she could see no reason for viewing women as impure or inferior to men, and she remains an inspiration to all Tenrikyo women today.

The fifth article is by Mohammad Jahangir Alam (University of Dhaka) and Limpa Das (University of Dhaka), "Exploring Daesoon Jinrihoe's Social Responsibility and Humanitarian Service." It is necessary here to pay tribute to Professor Alam (1977–2025), who was a tireless supporter of *JDTREA* and a generous and engaged colleague in the study of Asian new religions. The University of Dhaka, where he worked, is deprived of a fine scholar and a significant international ambassador by Professor Alam's death this year. We are honoured to publish this article posthumously, and to acknowledge his importance to the community of scholars engaged with this journal.

The next contribution is Jason Greenberger's (Institute for the Study of American Religion) "Blue Rooster Pagoda as an Introduction to Traditional East Asian Cosmology within Daesoon Jinrihoe," which is a study of the religious iconography of the *Cheonggyetap* at Yeoju Headquarters Temple Complex, the principal religious site of Daesoon Jinrihoe. Greenberger demonstrates that the symbols featured on the Blue Rooster Pagoda (which include traditional Chinese elements such as the Ox-Seeking Pictures and the Chinese Zodiac) represent a distinctive version of East Asian natural philosophy for members of Daesoon Truth.

The research articles conclude with Joo Soyeon's "Re-creation of Goguryeo Tomb Arts: *Sashindo* (Four Deities Pictures) in Daesoon". This article explores the links between Daesoon Jinrihoe as a twentieth century Korean new religion, and the ancient practices and iconography that the religion engages with. For example, the *Sashindo* or Four Deities Pictures depicted at the Yeoju Headquarters Temple show the creative inheritance of ancient Korean tomb mural art, *Sashindo*, of the Goguryeo dynasty (BCE 37–CE 668). Joo connects *Sashindo* painting with China and Japan and emphasizes how the cosmological meanings attached to it connect with those religions in contemporary Korea that wish to find meaning outside of the bustle of capitalism.

The journal issue is completed by reviews supplied by the Review Editor, Professor Holly Folk (Western Washington University). As ever, gratitude is due to Chairman Bae

Kyuhan, Lee Gyungwon, Jason Greenberger, and Choi Wonhyuk from Daejin University, and to the authors and referees who made this issue happen. It is a pleasure to reach a fifth year of publication of *JDTREA*, and I hope that there will be many more.

Carole M. Cusack
Editor of *JDTREA*
The University of Sydney

RESEARCH ARTICLES

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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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Original Articles

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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."
>
> 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.
>
> 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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Spirituality as Resistance: Daesoon Jinrihoe and the Creative Revitalization of Native Thought in Korea

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Abstract

Examining Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i side by side compels us to reconsider assumptions of what is "modern" and what is "good" for societies. These movements underscore that modernity, as commonly defined, does not have a monopoly on reason, ethics, or progress. They remind scholars and policy-makers alike that there exist plural modernities or even paths beyond modernity that integrate ancient wisdom with novel creativity. The relational ontologies embodied in these practices are not about rejecting airplanes, smartphones, or democratic institutions; they are about reimagining the cosmological narrative in which those things operate. They offer a narrative where community and cosmos are reunited, where moral and material are not divorced. The value of that narrative is not just in exotic religiosity, but in its potential to inspire more humane, sustainable ways of life.

Keywords: Daesoon Jinrihoe; Qoyllurit'i; Modernity; Plural Modernities; Relational Ontology; Cosmological Narrative; Sustainable Life

Introduction

Modern scholarship has increasingly challenged the binary opposition of "modernity" versus "tradition," noting that this dichotomy emerged from colonial power relations rather than neutral categories of analysis. In postcolonial and decolonial thought, what counts as rational, secular "modernity" has been privileged at the expense of other lifeworlds, which get labeled as irrational or "traditional" (Mignolo 2007; Escobar 2016; de la Cadena 2010). Scholars such as Walter Mignolo (2007) have described this hierarchy as part of the "coloniality" of knowledge, and Enrique Dussel's (2005) notion of transmodernity calls for transcending Eurocentric modernity by valuing marginalized epistemologies. Likewise, Bruno Latour urges analysts to treat Western modern ontologies and indigenous or premodern ontologies with equal scrutiny, dissolving the assumption that modern Western ways of knowing are the sole standard of reality (Latour 1993). In this article I follow these decolonial approaches and use "modernity" in a specific, critical sense: not as a neutral chronological stage, but as a historically Eurocentric project that linked industrialization, rationalization, and the nation-state to colonial expansion and to the marginalization of other epistemologies (Dussel 2005; Mignolo 2007; Escobar 2016). By "Western", therefore, I refer less to a fixed geographic region and more to this hegemonic model of modernity, which has been adopted, adapted, and contested in different parts of the world.

These perspectives provide a theoretical framework for understanding contemporary religious movements not as backward "survivals" of tradition nor as mere reactions to modernity, but as creative projects that re-enact reality on their own terms. In Latin American anthropology, concepts such as relational ontologies (Escobar 2016) and cosmopolitics (de la Cadena 2010) have been developed to describe worlds in which humans, nature, and the divine are deeply intertwined, offering alternatives to the dualisms of modern Western thought. In this article, I apply these perspectives to two specific colonial and postcolonial settings. When I refer to "colonialism" in what follows, I am primarily speaking of Spanish colonial rule in the Andes from the sixteenth century onward and of Japanese rule in Korea between 1910 and 1945, as well as of subsequent forms of cultural and epistemic coloniality in both regions.

Within this theoretical framing, the Korean new religious movement Daesoon Jinrihoe can be understood as an instance of ontological resilience and ethical creativity in the face of colonialism and modernity. In Korea, colonial rule in the early twentieth century was exercised by the Japanese Empire, which formally annexed Korea in 1910 and maintained colonial control until 1945. Although Japan was not a Western power in geographical terms, historians have shown how Japanese elites framed imperial expansion in East Asia as a project of "civilization" and modernization, selectively appropriating Western international law, racialized hierarchies, and developmental discourses while claiming a distinct regional leadership (Gluck 1985; Morris-Suzuki 1998; Lee 1999; Shin and Robinson 1999). From this perspective, Japanese colonialism in

Korea can be read as a regional mediation of Western-style modern imperialism rather than as a completely separate alternative to it.

Rather than viewing Daesoon Jinrihoe simply as an eclectic blend of old and new or as a "new religion" adapting to a changing society, we can read it as a deliberate revitalization of a relational, precolonial cosmology—one that had been disrupted by Japanese colonial rule (1910–1945) and the rapid modernization of Korea—where the core principles serve as forms of resistance to colonial epistemic dominance and to the disenchantment often associated with modern secularism. The movement reclaims and reinterprets indigenous Korean religious ideas (drawing from Daoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and folk shamanism) into a new system oriented toward healing a disrupted world. This can be interpreted as a deliberate redesign of the world—an active effort to create a world in which relational balance and cosmic reciprocity are restored. Marisol de la Cadena's (2010) work on indigenous cosmopolitics—where mountains, spirits, and other nonhuman beings participate in social life—resonates with how Daesoon Jinrihoe treats the cosmos as an extended community of beings. Such frameworks allow us to view Daesoon not as an anachronism but as a creative postcolonial project: one that offers an alternative to the hegemony of Western modernity by revitalizing relational ontology.

At the same time, this article argues that Daesoon Jinrihoe's activities constitute a form of "ethical creativity" through which a collective subjectivity takes shape and its cosmology is materialized in practices and institutions, reordering relations and values in a manner consistent with its ontology. In other words, Daesoon Jinrihoe's teachings and activities articulate what we might call spirituality as resistance: resistance to political subjugation and cultural erasure, and resistance to the notion that modern rationalism has rendered holistic cosmologies obsolete.

To further illuminate Daesoon Jinrihoe's significance, this article will also introduce a comparative case from a very different cultural setting: the annual pilgrimage of Qoyllurit'i in the Peruvian Andes. Qoyllurit'i (Quechua for "Lord of the Snow Star") is a religious festival-pilgrimage that embodies an Andean relational cosmology in syncretic form, combining Indigenous and Catholic elements. While Korean new religion and Andean festival are distinct in many respects, comparing them highlights parallel strategies of cultural and spiritual resilience. Both Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i have creatively adapted precolonial relational worldviews to withstand and respond to the impacts of colonialism and global modernity. By placing these cases side by side, we do not equate them or reduce one to the other; rather, we see convergent logics: each in its context demonstrates how holistic cosmologies (integrating humans with divine and natural orders) generate forms of continuity, adaptability, and ethical meaning that conventional secular frameworks fail to explain. Such a comparison also reinforces the argument that movements like Daesoon Jinrihoe are not relics of the past, but part of a broader contemporary quest for alternatives to the dominant modern ontology. Ultimately, this study aims to show that Daesoon Jinrihoe is an exemplary case of

cosmological revitalization and ethical subject formation that speaks to cross-cultural questions about knowledge, modernity, and the possibilities of living in relation with the world.

In what follows, the Theoretical Framework section outlines the postcolonial and ontological theories guiding this analysis, situating it in relation to existing scholarship on Daesoon Jinrihoe. The subsequent Historical Context section provides background on Daesoon Jinrihoe's origins in Korea's colonial and immediate postcolonial era, and introduces its core cosmological doctrines. The Doctrinal Holism section examines how those doctrines constitute an alternative ontology and ethical system, while Ethical Subjectivity and Institutional Development explores how Daesoon Jinrihoe cultivates moral subjects and builds institutions in line with its cosmology. A Comparative Perspective section then analyzes the Qoyllurit'i pilgrimage as an example of cosmological resistance in the Americas, drawing parallels and noting differences. Finally, the Discussion considers how these cases inform broader debates on modernity and tradition, and the Conclusion reflects on Daesoon Jinrihoe's significance as a model of ontological resistance and ethical creativity in a global context.

Theoretical Framework: Revitalization, Ontology, and Transmodernity

Any interpretation of Daesoon Jinrihoe builds upon a foundation of prior research in both Korean new religions and theoretical frameworks of cultural change. Previous scholarship on Daesoon Jinrihoe has offered valuable insights. Notably, Bernadette Rigal-Cellard (2021) analyzes Daesoon Jinrihoe through the lens of Anthony F. C. Wallace's classic theory of revitalization movements. Wallace (1956, 265) defined revitalization movements as "deliberate, organized, conscious efforts by members of a society to construct a more satisfying culture." Rigal-Cellard applies this to Daesoon, interpreting it as a large-scale cultural renewal that successfully institutionalized new rituals, organizations, and social services—which helps explain its remarkable growth among the many movements tracing back to Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909) (Rigal-Cellard 2021). In a subsequent comparative study, Rigal-Cellard (2022) examines Daesoon theological concepts (such as the incarnation of the Divine in Daesoon thought) alongside Christian categories, highlighting Daesoon's sophisticated doctrinal system. Kim (2021) adds that Daesoon's unique appeal lies in its orientation that brings the vision of paradise into the here-and-now through lived practice. Taken together, these studies illuminate key aspects of Daesoon Jinrihoe's success: its ability to synthesize diverse traditions, its robust institutional structure, and its promise of an imminent transformed world.

Building on and reframing this scholarship, the present analysis shifts toward a postcolonial and ontological perspective. Rather than understanding revitalization only in functional or institutional terms, I approach Daesoon Jinrihoe's renewal as a process of ontological resistance, particularly from a relational ontology. Here I draw inspiration from Latin American and other global theorists who emphasize the ontological

dimension of cultural resistance.

Following Escobar (2016, 57), "ontology refers to those premises that different social groups maintain about the entities that 'really' exist in the world" (my translation). The author explains that ontologies bring worlds into being because they determine which entities exist, their modes of existence, and the kinds of actions and relations possible among them. From this perspective, modern ontology is dualist—because it rests on the essential separation between nature and culture, mind and body, etc.—and instrumental—insofar as it conceives of the world as "populated by 'individuals' who manipulate 'objects' and move in 'markets', all self-constituted and self-regulating" (Escobar 2016, 57). Thus, this ontology imagines self-sufficient subjects in a world of self-sufficient objects. It is in this sense that notions so central to western thought such as "individual," "rationality," and "private property", as well as the division of the reality into different discrete spheres (political, economic, religious, etc.) can be understood.

By "relational ontologies" we therefore mean those cosmologies in which the human, biological, physical, and "supernatural" dimensions do not represent essentially differentiated and separate entities but rather sustain relations of continuity and/or interdependence (Escobar 2016). In these ontologies, the human and the non-human are linked in complex ways, giving rise to a universe of multiple entities and agencies in which the idea of the "individual" has no place.

As to the narrative of modernity, Latin American philosopher Enrique Dussel (2005) critiques it as a self-contained European achievement. He points out that what is called "modernity" (beginning around the 16th century) was inextricably intertwined with coloniality—the conquest and exploitation of the Americas, Africa, and Asia. Modern science, capitalism, and nation-states came about through the incorporation and subjugation of other cultures, whose knowledge and being were largely erased or devalued. Thus, the linear history that posits Ancient–Medieval–Modern (with Europe as the protagonist) is an ideological construction that renders the global majority invisible. Dussel proposes *transmodernity* as a vision of going beyond this Eurocentric modernity by including the perspectives and contributions of those previously excluded. Transmodernity is not anti-modern or a simple return to tradition; it is "moving away from universality towards pluriversality", creating a "truly horizontal dialogue" among cultures and knowledge systems. In this light, we will analyze that Daesoon Jinrihoe can be interpreted as a transmodern endeavor: it neither completely rejects modern advancements nor simply continues premodern forms but instead seeks to fold modern Korea's challenges into a broader cosmology that draws on Korea's spiritual heritage. Likewise, the Andean cosmology in Qoyllurit'i can be seen as transmodern, fusing pre-Hispanic and colonial elements into a living, evolving practice that speaks to present-day indigenous identity and ecological concerns.

Bruno Latour, a French anthropologist of science, offers another angle by questioning the basic categorical split that undergirds the concept of modernity. In *We Have Never Been Modern*, Latour argues that the modern distinction between Nature and Society (or

between object and subject, science and culture) is in fact a myth: in practice, even the so-called modern world is full of "hybrid networks" that entangle humans and non-humans, facts and values (Latour 1993). Modernity's claim to fame was the "purification" of these domains—as if we could talk about society with no reference to nature (social constructivism) and about nature with no reference to society (scientific objectivism). But Latour points out that modern life constantly produces mixtures as in climate change: an ostensibly natural phenomenon that is entirely tied to human activity, or a tech device that is simultaneously material and cultural.

Thus, his provocative claim is that we have never truly been modern in the sense of the modernist ideal; the binaries were rhetorical. To properly study our world, Latour calls for a "symmetrical anthropology"— one that uses the same analytical approach to understand Western scientific institutions as it does to understand tribal rituals. He urges scholars to "take seriously the real entanglements of actors (humans, things, institutions)" without presupposing that moderns are rational and non-moderns are animated by myths. Instead of an "ontological hierarchy" where modern nature is real and indigenous nature is imagined, he calls to an acknowledgment that multiple ontologies interact symmetrically

Walter Mignolo (and other decolonial theorists) echo this idea by advocating "pluriversality" as opposed to universality. The pluriverse notion, also popularized by Arturo Escobar, conceives of the pluriverse as an alternative to the one-world ontology of modernity (Mignolo 2007). In a pluriverse, Western scientific-material ontology is just one among many valid ways of world-making, coexisting with others. Pluriversal politics would entail defending these different ontologies and allowing them to shape shared reality, rather than enforcing one hegemonic model.

In this conceptual context, anthropologist Marisol de la Cadena introduces the idea of cosmopolitics to describe political situations that involve multiple ontologies. In her study of Andean activism, she notes that when indigenous actors bring their sacred relations (e.g., earth-beings like mountains or spirits) into the public political realm, they produce a "rupture of modern politics" because they exceed the framework of what counts as "political" (de la Cadena 2010). Politics, as defined by modernity, had excluded non-humans except as resources; now suddenly nature appears as an agent with demands (e.g., rights of nature in Ecuador's constitution). De la Cadena calls this indigenous cosmopolitics in the sense of a politics of the cosmos, where different worlds meet and must negotiate. The presence of earth-beings in protests, for instance, is not simply a different belief, but a different reality asserting itself, one where the line between spiritual and material is irrelevant.

These theoretical perspectives foreground ontology as a site of resistance. Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i make it especially evident that they refuse to compartmentalize reality into disenchanted nature versus human culture. Gods, spirits, humans, animals, and earth are continuous and interrelated in these ontologies, undermining what Latour calls the "Modern Constitution." In sum, this theoretical framework combines previous

Daesoon scholarship with postcolonial theory, the anthropology of ontologies, and Latin American thought to re-situate Daesoon Jinrihoe as an exemplar of ontological resistance and ethical creativity in the modern world.

Historical Context of Daesoon Jinrihoe in Korea and its Core Principles

Daesoon Jinrihoe must be understood in the historical context of Korea's early 20th-century upheavals and the legacy of a charismatic religious figure, Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909) (Flaherty 2004). Kang Jeungsan lived during a period when Korea's sovereignty was eroding under foreign encroachments. Notably, he was a youth during the Donghak Peasant Rebellion of 1894, an armed uprising influenced by the indigenous Donghak (Eastern Learning) religion against corrupt officials and encroaching Japanese influence (Introvigne 2018). According to Daesoon accounts, Kang Jeungsan foresaw the failure of the 1894 rebellion and advised his followers not to participate as he believed that deeper, cosmological changes were needed to truly liberate the world (WRSP 2020).

This idea of a need for a deep spiritual change was central to Jeungsan thought and will be the landmark of Daesoon Jinrihoe. Indeed, between 1901 and 1909, Kang Jeungsan undertook what his disciples call the "Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth", a series of mystical and ritual undertakings intended to rectify the disturbed cosmic order (Introvigne 2018; Kim 2021; Rigal-Cellard 2021). Implicit in these works was the idea that the coming of foreign powers and the suffering of Korea were part of a cosmic drama requiring divine intervention and relational healing. In doing this reordering works, Kang Jeungsan manifested himself as *Gucheon Sangje*, the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven (WRSP 2020).

Jeungsan taught that the current chaotic status of the world was the result of a long period of disharmony and energetic disorder, and that the world was entering a period of cosmic transformation that would eventually lead to the Later Heaven, which would resolve the injustices of the past and constitute a living present paradise (Flaherty 2004; Rigal-Cellard 2021). From a syncretic reclamation of Korean geomancy, Confucianism, Buddhism, religious Taoism, and Korean shamanism, Kang's revelations and miraculous acts attracted disciples and laid the foundations for a family of religious movements now termed Jeungsanism (Flaherty 2004). After Kang's death in 1909, his spiritual mantle was passed down through various successors. One main claimant to succession was Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958), and through him the next successor was Park Wudang (1917–1996) (Introvigne 2018). It was under Park Wudang's leadership that Daesoon Jinrihoe was formally established and registered as an organization in 1969 (Introvigne 2018; Rigal-Cellard 2021).

It is significant that this reorganization happened in the late 1960s—a time when South Korea was embarking on intensive economic development and modernization. In fact, Daesoon Jinrihoe's official founding came just as the country's government was promoting a narrative of "modernization" (Álvarez 2021). During these years, South

Korea underwent urbanization, industrialization, and social upheaval. By the late 20th century, Daesoon Jinrihoe had grown into the largest Jeungsanist religion and one of the most prominent new religious movements in Korea (Introvigne 2018; Rigal-Cellard 2021). It claims membership numbers in the hundreds of thousands (with some sources estimating between half a million to a million adherents) and maintains a nationwide infrastructure (Introvigne 2018; WRSP 2020). The movement's headquarters at Yeoju is a sprawling complex featuring grand temples and training centers, and the organization operates multiple institutions including a university (Daejin University), secondary schools, research institutes, and charities such as hospitals (Rigal-Cellard 2021; WRSP 2020). This extensive institutional development is notable given that over one hundred smaller groups (and a large one, Jeungsando) also emerged from Kang Jeungsan's lineage. Daesoon Jinrihoe's relative success in outpacing its rivals is often attributed to the strength and appeal of its doctrines and its organized social outreach (Introvigne 2018; Rigal-Cellard 2021). Importantly, Daesoon Jinrihoe frames its mission as the realization of Kang's vision of the Later World, a transformed world, not in an afterlife but on earth, through human effort and divine aid combined (Kim 2021). This orientation toward an imminent utopia or "Earthly Paradise" sets it apart from both secular modern ideologies and conventional otherworldly religions.

At the heart of Daesoon Jinrihoe's doctrinal system stand four tenets (not to be conflated with the Four Cardinal Mottos that summarize cultivation): *Eumyang-hapdeok*, *Sinin johwa* (often romanized *Shinin-johwa*), *Haewon-sangsaeng*, and *Dotong-jingyeong*—also written *Dotong-jingyeong*. *Eumyang-hapdeok* (Virtuous Concordance of Yin and yang) reinterprets the East Asian cosmology of *yin–yang* dual forces, emphasizing that true harmony (*Hapdeok*, literally "joining virtues") arises from balancing complementary energies (Baker 2022). In Daesoon thought, cosmic and social harmony require integration of dualities (male/female, dark/light, etc.) in a morally virtuous way. At the core of this principle is the idea that yin and yang are not *opposite things* but mutually influencing forces or ways of behaving (Baker 2022). In this register, "virtue" is more precisely understood as "power" and is closely tied to right action: when one comports oneself rightly—virtuously—in relation to the surrounding world, the world (beings and things alike) responds in kind with "right" actions (Baker 2022). Accordingly, the Virtuous Concordance of Yin and Yang designates the proper co-ordination of complementary forces under the guidance of such moral potency; rightly ordered reciprocity between yin and yang has the power to sustain harmony.

Sinin johwa—Harmonious Union of Divine and Humans—refers to the alignment and mutual attunement (*johwa*) between divine beings (*yin*) and human beings (*yang*) (Fehler 2023). This principle posits that gods (spirits) and humans should communicate and cooperate to bring about cosmic order. Once human beings have resolved past grievances and attained sufficient enlightenment to prevent future ones, they are able to enter into harmony with divine beings and receive their guidance. At the same time, these divine beings themselves benefit from this perfective interaction. For such a state

to be realized, the human mind must be brought into alignment with the mind of the Supreme God, having already healed all grievances generated by one's actions. Thus, *Sinin Jobwa* entails that human spiritual cultivation and divine guidance must work in concert to heal the world, and their collaboration is a desired goal in Daesoon Jinrihoe's practice (Introvigne 2018). The ultimate vision is the creation of a *Dotong gunja* or perfected human being, a transformed person who lives in accord with the Dao.

Haewon-sangsaeng—Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence—is perhaps the signature ethical principle of Daesoon Jinrihoe. The concept signifies that the fundamental disharmony in the world comes from accumulated grievances— injustices, resentments, and unresolved hurts that have proliferated throughout history and across the spirit world (Huang 2021). Such grievances arise when one's actions or words cause frustration, offense, or unfulfilled desires in others, often rooted in vanity or greed, whether in this life or past lives and between individuals, social groups, or even between humans and spirits. These resentments are seen as embodied in spirits of grievance (*cheok-sin*), which obstruct personal success and may even transmit across generations through familial ties. Behaviors such as hatred, ingratitude, slander, harm, or intransigence are identified as sources of such grievances. Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that resolving grievances through forgiveness, repentance, and ritual atonement is the precondition for any new era of harmony. When grievances are resolved, all parties can thrive together (mutual life-benefiting). Scholars have highlighted this principle as encapsulating the movement's relational ethos: suffering and conflict are not denied but *reframed* as problems to be solved through moral action, thereby enabling shared flourishing (Huang 2021). Its telos is the restoration of harmony among complementary forces (yin/yang; divine/human), culminating in the realized earthly paradise.

Dotong-jingyeong—Unification with the Dao in the True Realm—expresses the eschatological goal of Daesoon practice and the three previous tenets (Huang 2021; Introvigne 2018). *Dotong* means The Perfected State of Unification with the Dao and denotes a condition in which human beings and the entirety of the Three Realms—Heaven, Earth, and Humanity—attain a consummate, genuinely enlightened state. Through disciplined cultivation that purifies mind and body and removes all lingering grievances, an individual may become fully unified with the great divinities and thereby realize human perfection. In this transformation, the Three Realms are elevated to the highest ontological dimension. Those who attain this state acquire a comprehensive understanding of the cosmos and the capacity to enact their will; the cumulative effect of such attainments is the eventual emergence of an enduring paradisical order in the world, the realization of Kang Jeungsan's Later World on earth.

These principles are not treated as abstract metaphysics; they are intimately tied to ritual practice and ethical conduct. Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that only through sustained moral discipline and communal ritual can the world be transformed. The movement's foundational scripture and subsequent teachings outline a range of practices aimed at enacting the Four Tenets in daily life. Chief among these practices is the triad of *Suryeon*,

Gido, and *Gongbu*—often termed the "three trainings" (Kim 2021; Introvigne 2018). *Suryeon* (spiritual refinement) involves meditation, breathing exercises, and moral self-cultivation techniques to purify one's mind and body. *Gido* (prayer and invocation) involves communicating with the divine—including prayers to Kang Jeungsan as the *Gucheon Sangje*—to seek guidance and supernatural aid in resolving grievances. *Gongbu* (holy study or work) refers to the collective recitation of sacred scriptures and the performance of ritual duties, often carried out in cycles at the movement's central temple in Yeoju (Kim 2021). As Rigal-Cellard (2022) observes, Daesoon Jinrihoe has created a highly systematized ritual life: daily, weekly, and seasonal rites continuously reinforce the cosmic principles and knit the community together. In essence, doctrine and practice are inseparable—the cosmology is lived through liturgy and ethical action. This integration has been crucial to the movement's durability and appeal, as it offers adherents a tangible way to participate in what they see as the healing of the world alongside with divine beings.

From a religious studies perspective, recognizing Daesoon Jinrihoe's continuity with earlier Korean thought is as important as noting what is new. Scholars emphasize that although Daesoon is a modern movement, it consciously places itself in continuity with Korea's rich religious heritage (Baker 2022). The influence of Daoism is evident in the emphasis on yin–yang harmony and the aspiration to unity with the Dao (Baker 2022). Confucian ethics are reflected in the stress on moral cultivation and righteous social relations—albeit Daesoon infuses these with eschatological urgency rather than upholding a static social order (Rigal-Cellard 2021). Buddhist elements appear in the form of meditation practices and the ideal of liberating all sentient beings from suffering (Kim 2021). Shamanistic and folk beliefs come through in the attention to ancestral spirits, the concept of cosmic grievances, and the performative rituals to pacify spirits—themes long present in Korean shamanism (Flaherty 2004). Yet, as Bernadette Rigal-Cellard (2021, 2022) argues, Daesoon Jinrihoe's syncretism is not a mere patchwork: it is creative and purposeful, forging a new system oriented toward a collective salvation in this world. This doctrinal holism—melding ideas of harmony, reconciliation, and renewal—effectively sacralizes the project of Korea's healing and forward development in what can be seen as an ontological resistance. It allowed Daesoon's followers to view the tumult of their times not as chaos to be escaped, but as part of a cosmic plan in which they had an active role to play.

Doctrinal Holism, Relational Ontology, and Cosmological Revitalization

Daesoon Jinrihoe's theology can be characterized as a form of holistic cosmological revitalization. By "holistic," we mean that it refuses to segregate the religious, the ethical, and the cosmological form other spheres—the human moral order and the cosmic order are deeply interdependent. As mentioned, Daesoon doctrine draws from multiple

religious sources, but it recombines them into a coherent worldview centered on healing and harmonizing all levels of existence. This section delves further into how Daesoon's key doctrines function as tools of ontological resistance, illustrating the movement's ethical creativity.

One striking feature is the reinterpretation of classical East Asian cosmology in explicitly ethical terms. For example, as we have seen, the concept of yin and yang—ubiquitous in East Asian thought as complementary cosmic forces—is moralized in Daesoon Jinrihoe under *Eumyang-hapdeok*. Daesoon teaching insists that humans must actively bring yin and yang into virtuous concord for the world's benefit by cultivating morality and resolving grievances. This implies that disorder or misfortune (whether personal or social) results from a loss of balance that is at once physical and moral. Thus, harmonizing yin and yang is not just a cosmological description but a normative task—a duty of ethical restoration. In this way, Daesoon Jinrihoe transforms a metaphysical principle into a call for action, aligning with Kang Jeungsan's vision that humans bear active responsibility in the cosmic reordering.

The principles of *Haewon-sangsaeng* and *Sinin-johwa* illustrate Daesoon Jinrihoe's doctrinal holism and relational ontology. Scholars note the links between the individual, the social, and the cosmic: personal misfortunes are explained as the result of *won* (grievances) one has incurred or inherited, while collective tragedies—such as Korea's colonization—are interpreted as cosmically significant *won* (Rigal-Cellard 2021). Rather than prescribing passive acceptance or otherworldly escape, Daesoon prescribes *engagement*: through rituals of repentance, compensation, and charitable works, adherents seek to appease the spirits of those wronged, both human and non-human (Introvigne 2018; Rigal-Cellard 2021; Soryte 2022). Huang (2021) analyzes *Haewon-sangsaeng* as a "religio-ethical metaphor" that reframes suffering not as fate or divine punishment but as a debt that can be repaid and nullified. This reframing empowers believers, telling them that agency is possible even in the face of collective trauma. *Sinin-johwa* align human activity with the divine beings engaged in reordering the world's karmic ledger; ethically, they cultivate a profound sense of interconnected responsibility.

Daesoon Jinrihoe's narrative of an impending *Hucheon Gaebyeok* (Great Opening of the Later World) is a hallmark of its cosmological revitalization. The term *Gaebeyeok* literally means "opening" or epochal beginning, and in Jeungsanist traditions it connotes the transition from the Former to the Later World: a cosmic upheaval and renewal, akin to a dawn after a long night of suffering (Flaherty 2004; Kim 2021; Ko and Greenberger 2023). While several Jeungsanist groups expected apocalyptic interventions at specific dates (Introvigne 2018; WRSP 2020), Daesoon Jinrihoe instead emphasizes process: the *Hucheon Gaebyeok* unfolds gradually as adherents engage in *Haewon-sangsaeng* and *Eumyang-hapdeok*. As we saw, the result of the careful realization of both with *Sinin-johwa* is the *Dotong-jingyeong*. All this process in present life can achieve the *Hucheon Gaebyeok* in history rather than deferred to an afterlife. Thus, Daesoon revitalizes not only culture but the world: a reordering of reality itself, a conscious attempt to midwife

a new age world-making. Far from mere utopian fantasy, the promise of *Hucheon Gaebyeok*—anchored in concrete ritual and ethical practice—has proven a powerful motivation for the movement's sustained growth (Palmer and Greenberger 2021; Rigal-Cellard 2021).

Finally, Daesoon Jinrihoe's syncretic doctrine can be understood as a form of soteriological creativity—the creation of new pathways to salvation. Rigal-Cellard (2021, 2022) emphasizes that Daesoon's synthesis goes beyond defensive adaptation, producing a collective and this-worldly vision of salvation. Unlike missionary Christianity or modern secular ideologies, which often oppose spirit and matter or individual and collective, Daesoon seeks to save all beings together—humans, spirits, and nature—through restored harmony (Kim 2021; Introvigne 2018; Baker 2022). In addition, its incarnational teaching that Kang Jeungsan embodied *Gucheon Sangje* and the practice of *Sinin-johwa* situates the divine within human history.

This creative doctrine of "salvation-through-harmony" addresses the alienations of modernity—humans from nature, individuals from community, generations from ancestors—and re-enchants the world in Daesoon's own terms. As Wang (2022) observes, the power of *Haewon-sangsaeng* lies not only in restoring human relations but also in extending an ethic of reciprocity to the natural world. In this sense, Daesoon Jinrihoe's re-enchantment of the world is not limited to reintegrating the sacred into human life; it also sacralizes entire ecologies, projecting an ecological civilization as the horizon of cosmic harmony. Rutana (2024) complements this view by demonstrating how Daesoon Jinrihoe articulates ethical obligations toward non-human animals, inscribing them into the field of cosmic reciprocity. In comparative perspective, Kohn (2024) shows how Daoist traditions emphasize the ontological interconnectedness of Dao, world, and humanity, thereby overcoming the modern dualism of nature and culture. Daesoon Jinrihoe resonates with this logic, reinforcing its capacity to re-enchant the world through an ethic of interconnectedness.

Ethical Creativity: Collective Subjectivity and Institutional Development

A crucial dimension of Daesoon Jinrihoe's success is how it translates its grand cosmological vision into the lived reality of a community. The movement not only preaches doctrines of harmony and reconciliation; it actively cultivates what we might call a collective ethical subjectivity. I use the term "collective ethical subjectivity" to highlight that, in Daesoon Jinrihoe, ethical self-cultivation is not merely an individual pursuit but a communal process, enacted through shared rituals, doctrines, and institutions, leading to a shared identity as moral agents working toward cosmic renewal. This section explores how Daesoon Jinrihoe ethical creativity shapes its followers' ethical outlook and builds a durable institutional structure, demonstrating the stable interplay between doctrine and everyday practice.

Palmer and Greenberger (2021) explain that Daesoon Jinrihoe's approach to children is comparatively modest and recent. The movement is primarily designed for adults, and children do not usually participate in core devotional activities; formal youth programming began only in 2005 with the creation of annual Youth Camps and the youth magazine *Donggeurami*. These camps emphasize socialization, age-appropriate activities, and light instruction (history of the movement, dramatizations of key precepts such as "promote the betterment of others"), while formal religious practice for children is limited (Palmer and Greenberger 2021). Most children of members attend regular secular schools, even though Daesoon Jinrihoe operates some educational institutions, and there is no policy of insulating them from wider society. The literature and interview data reported by Palmer and Greenberger indicate no evidence of coercive separation, forced indoctrination, or shunning; rather, parents and leaders frame youth education as offering knowledge of the faith while preserving children's future freedom to choose as adults.

In the adult religious life of Daesoon Jinrihoe, ritual practice serves as a technology of the self in the Foucauldian sense—a disciplined set of practices shaping subjects' minds and bodies toward desired virtues (Foucault 1988). The thrice-daily prayers, the group chanting sessions, the breathing exercises of *Suryeon*, and the collective welfare activities are all designed to cultivate compassion, self-consciousness and fellowship (Kim 2021). Significantly, these practices are conducted in group settings, reinforcing a communitarian ethos. Seemingly secular activities—free medical clinics, disaster relief efforts, cultural festivals—are imbued with religious meaning and often opened with prayer or scripture. They serve the dual purpose of social service and spiritual cultivation, blurring the line between charity and ritual (Šorytė 2022).

As Introvigne (2018) points out, in Daesoon Jinrihoe practices visual arts and architecture are conceived as integral components of religious cultivation rather than as decorative embellishments. Beauty is understood as both a foretaste of the Later World and a practical means for advancing the perfected unification with Dao in the true realm (*Dotong-jingyeong*) and the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence (*Haewon-sangsaeng*). Practices such as *dancheong*—the traditional harmonization of colors on sacred buildings—create spaces that embody harmony and allow participants to experience an anticipation of the earthly paradise to come. Artistic programs thus serve a didactic function, conveying the religion's cosmology through images and structures, while the process of making them is carried out collectively by devotees. Works are unsigned, underscoring that their value lies in cooperative moral action and devotion rather than in the self-expression of individual artists.

The institutional development of Daesoon Jinrihoe is impressive. By the 1980s and 1990s, Daesoon Jinrihoe had established a centralized administration with various departments overseeing education, temple management, proselytization, and welfare projects (WRSP 2020; Rigal-Cellard 2022; Šorytė 2022). Daesoon Jinrihoe founded Daejin University in 1992, which today is an accredited institution offering secular and

religious education (Šorytė 2022). The movement's leadership has engaged with broader society by hosting academic conferences (e.g., on comparative religion and philosophy) and participating in interfaith activities (Šorytė 2022). All of these institutional endeavors serve to legitimize and normalize Daesoon Jinrihoe's presence in Korean society, moving it beyond the fringe. But they also serve an internal function: they realize the movement's ethical teachings in concrete forms. For instance, the Daesoon Jinrihoe Welfare Foundation runs facilities for elder care, welfare centers, and medical services alongside educational foundations, reflecting the ideal of mutual beneficence in practice (Rigal-Cellard 2022; Šorytė 2022). This institutionalization of charity and education echoes what Anthony Wallace identified as a stage in revitalization movements where the new vision becomes routinized and structurally embedded (Rigal-Cellard 2021). In Rigal-Cellard's (2021) terms, Daesoon Jinrihoe has successfully "constructed a more satisfying culture" for its members, complete with its own schools, sacred spaces, social services, and community life, thereby ensuring its longevity.

As stated before, it is important to note that Daesoon Jinrihoe's ethical system is not focused on individual salvation or enlightenment alone; it is inherently collectivist and relational. The notion of a "collective ethical subject" means that members perceive their moral and spiritual growth as contributing to a larger whole—the welfare of all sentient beings and the balance of the cosmos. This perspective can counter the alienation often found in modern urban life by situating persons within a larger, "cosmic" kinship. This can help foster strong mutual support networks and a sense that one's problems are shared and understood in a transcendent context.

From an analytical standpoint, this formation of ethical subjectivity is a key factor in Daesoon Jinrihoe's resilience. Movements that survive beyond their founding generation often do so because they manage to instill in their adherents a durable identity and purpose. Daesoon Jinrihoe has done this by tying personal virtue to cosmic significance. Building on Baker's (2022) analysis of Daesoon philosophy, this places Daesoon thought on a different plane than Western secular-progressive narratives: in Daesoon, ethical action is part of the structure of reality—linked to an earthly paradise horizon, an in-this-world consummation—so that setbacks can be endured by drawing on a deep reservoir of meaning. In other words, every good act bears cosmic repercussions and this belief can be a powerful motivator for sustaining commitment.

Comparative Perspective: Qoyllurit'i and Andean Cosmological Resistance

While Daesoon Jinrihoe is rooted in the specific historical and cultural context of Korea, its themes of cosmological revitalization and relational ontology resonate with movements and traditions elsewhere. To highlight the broader relevance of these ideas, it is illuminating to turn to a seemingly distant example: the Qoyllurit'i (Quechua for "Lord of the Snow Star") pilgrimage in the Peruvian Andes. It is a large, multi-day

pilgrimage near Mount Sinakara Valley of Cusco region, that has gained national and international visibility and was recognized by UNESCO as part of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (UNESCO 2011). On the surface, Qoyllurit'i and Daesoon Jinrihoe could not be more different—one is a Catholic-Andean pilgrimage involving ritual dances and a syncretic saint veneration, the other a modern new religion with a formalized doctrine and global outreach. Yet at a deeper level, both can be seen as creative, resilient responses of relational cosmologies to colonial and modern pressures. Placing them side by side allows a sort of cross-cultural mirroring: each case can shed light on the other by emphasizing shared patterns. Importantly, this comparison is not to homogenize the two or suggest an underlying unity of all non-Western religions, but to appreciate how distinct cultures can independently evolve holistic worldviews that challenge the modern secular paradigm. To do this, I first sketch core features of Andean cosmology and then situate Qoyllurit'i within that horizon.

The Andean worldview—developed over millennia from early highland civilizations through the Inca—articulates a holistic understanding of the universe in which human, natural, and divine domains are mutually constitutive rather than sharply separated (Zenteno Brun 2009). A central trait is animacy: mountains, rivers, stars, animals, rocks and plants are treated as beings endowed with spirit and will, included within a wider social community to which humans are accountable (Di Salvia 2016). In this sense, the Andean world is not anthropocentric but a relational field among multiple coexisting entities, human and other-than-human alike (de la Cadena 2010; di Salvia 2016; Salas Carreño 2014).

Thus, life unfolds through continuous interrelation between cosmic and telluric forces, often figured in the complementary pairing of *Pachamama* (Mother Earth) and *Pachakamaq* (celestial principle) (Randall 1982). Dual categories—day/night, sun/moon, earth/sky, male/female, above/below—function as complementary pairs whose balanced cooperation generates life and equilibrium; the same logic shapes ritual practice and social organization, including complementary moieties. Reciprocity (*ayni*) and respect organize these exchanges such that human actions call for corresponding responses to maintain cosmic harmony (Zenteno Brun 2009). In everyday life, reciprocity is routinely enacted across agricultural, social, and ceremonial domains (Zenteno Brun 2009; Limón Olvera 2024).

Another hallmark of the Andean worldview is its understanding of history as a series of interrelated cycles (Mignolo 2007; Randall 1982; Zenteno Brun 2009). This is evident in the continuity of agricultural cycles, in which time is conceived as non-linear. At the same time, history in Andean thought is also organized around major crises that mark the end of one era and the beginning of another, where each era preserves within itself a portion of the preceding one while engendering the next, forming a continuum of mutually influencing cycles. This way, remnants of past eras may re-emerge in the present, especially in ritual and myth. This is deeply connected to Andean peoples' everyday relationship with their ancestors—human and non-human—and to the rituals

intended to communicate with them. Thus, relations of reciprocity are not confined to the present but traverse time dynamically, with multitemporal and multispatial repercussions. Finally, change and temporal rupture are regarded as moments of "world turnarounds" that inaugurate a new order. In this way, the major historical shifts in Andean history have been understood not as moments of "chaos," but as events of transformation and world-reordering (Randall 1982; Zenteno Brun 2009).

Qoyllurit'I materializes this ontology by performing relations among humans, sacred mountain beings (*apus*), celestial bodies, and catholic divinities. Every year in late May or early June, thousands of indigenous Quechua and foreign pilgrims from various regions trek into the thin-aired heights (over 4,600 meters elevation) to attend this multi-day festival. The ostensible focus of devotion is an image of the Lord of Qoyllurit'i, a miraculous image of Christ painted on a rock on the mountainside, which is associated with a local apparition legend from the late 18th century (in which a young boy, interpreted as an incarnation of Christ, vanished on the mountain leaving the image behind) (Randall 1982; Salas Carreño 2014). The pilgrimage coincides with the Catholic liturgical calendar and culminates just before the feast of Corpus Christi. The rituals conducted thus involve Catholic symbols—the crucifix, images of the Christ child—but it also entails indigenous ones—most notably, the *apus* embodied by Sinakara and nearby peaks and ritual vestments with mythological meaning (Salas Careeño 2014; Pajuelo Teves 2019). The timing of the festival aligns with the reappearance of the Pleiades constellation in the night sky, which Andean people see as a marker of the new year and agricultural cycle (Pajuelo Teves 2019; Randall 1982). Thus, the pilgrimage is a celebration of the renewal of the cosmos—it marks the moment when the stars return and the annual cycle of life begins anew. In Quechua understanding, it is a time when the door between the human community and the deities opens, allowing exchange of energy and blessings.

Processions of organized pilgrim "nations," each linked to specific valleys and their tutelary mountains, circulate the sanctuary with crosses, standards, and dance choreographies that are explicitly framed as reciprocal offerings to the *apu*; dance and procession thus operate as relational labor directed toward the landscape itself (Kania 2019; Salas Carreño 2014). Ritual specialists mediate between the shrine and the glaciered peaks, enacting a diplomacy across domains (de la Cadena 2010; Salas Carreño 2014). Among these, one prominent figure is the *ukukus* (dancers dressed as a mythic bear-man) who climb the glacier at night to fetch a chunk of ice that was traditionally believed to be medicinal and sacred. The *ukukus'* nocturnal ascent is like a shamanic journey, bringing the mountain's essence down to the people. Following the descent, the dancing troupes return the crosses to the local church, where the entire procession converges and the Blessing Mass is celebrated (Salas Carreño 2014). If the celebration from the previous night is of a chaotic nature, the descent and the entry into the church occur in an orderly fashion: the nocturnal passage to dawn dramatizes the transition from the period of chaos associated with the disappearance of the Pleiades to their

ordering return, structured by the Andean energies alternation that organizes the year (Randall 2019).

During the celebrations, offerings—coca, libations, candles—are made both before Christ on the sacred rock and at outdoor altars oriented toward Sinakara, so that Catholic devotion and Andean offerings are enacted within the same ritual circuit (Salas Carreño 2014). In this context, the figure of Christ is interpreted through an Andean lens: he is considered a powerful ancestor or perhaps a *huaca* (sacred being) who, rather than displacing the mountain spirit, works in tandem with it. Moreover, ethnographic accounts foreground the polyphony of agencies that participants report—Christ, the mountain, the virgin Mary and the starry sky—without forcing a single hierarchy of causes, evidencing that the numerous entities involved are not antagonists but allies in a shared sacred landscape.

Over the years, Qoyllurit'i has faced the encroachment of various modern forces: increasing tourism (including an influx of middle-class Peruvians and foreign visitors), state intervention and regulation (especially as heritage visibility expanded), and climate change. Glaciers in the tropical Andes—specifically in Peru's Cordillera Vilcanota—have experienced sustained, accelerating retreat since the late 1970s, reshaping hydrology and highland ecologies (Kania 2019). This environmental shift directly touches a core practice at Qoyllurit'i: amid growing concern about glacier recession, in 2003 the Council of Pilgrim Nations, in coordination with custodial bodies, banned cutting ice from glaciers; since then, *ukukus* typically return with small bottles of sacred water or with naturally detached ice fragments—symbolic substitutions that preserve the ritual's meaning while mitigating impact (Kania 2019).

Likewise, as government agencies and heritage frameworks have attempted to formalize or manage aspects of the festival, the core custodians—the traditional *nations* of dancers and the local lay confraternity responsible for shrine management—have negotiated changes so as not to undermine sacred autonomy; the result has been a reconfiguration that sustains a living Andean ethos rather than its secularization (Kania 2019; de la Cadena 2010).

It is not that Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i are directly comparable in all respects. There are pronounced differences in theology, organizational structure, and historical trajectory: Daesoon Jinrihoe is a formalized new religion with a founder's doctrine and centralized institutions, whereas Qoyllurit'i is a communal pilgrimage emerging from collective indigenous tradition. The sociopolitical milieus also diverge—one rooted in twentieth-century Korea confronting colonialism, war, and rapid modernization; the other, in an Andean world negotiating colonial Catholicism and ongoing environmental and cultural transformations. Yet the comparative value lies in how each confronts disruption. Both Daesoon and Qoyllurit'i transform rupture into continuity. Neither preserves a pre-colonial world unchanged; each transfigures inherited ontologies so they speak to present conditions. Daesoon's cosmology is continuous with Korean religio-philosophical inheritances but reorganized to address modern crises. Qoyllurit'i

perpetuates an Andean ritual cycle that predates conquest while weaving Catholic symbols into a landscape of animated mountains and saints, enabling indigenous sacred relations to endure. From the inside, such processes are experienced less as revival than as the ongoing practice of living in a meaningful cosmos—a regeneration of the world rather than the creation of a new one. These insights invite a reconsideration of how we conceptualize modernity, tradition, and resistance.

Conclusions

The cases of Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i invite a critical examination of how we understand religion and reality within the dominant Western secular framework. Both phenomena in their own way highlight the limits of the modern ontological lens—that is, the worldview which separates subject from object, human from nature, religion from politics, and so on. Western modernity, rooted in Enlightenment thought, often presumes a one-size-fits-all epistemology: true knowledge is scientific, secular, and materialist, while religious or cosmological claims belong to the realm of subjective belief or cultural artifact. From this viewpoint, movements like Daesoon Jinrihoe tend to be seen as either remnants of tradition adapting to modernity or as new inventions providing psychosocial comfort to their adherents. Likewise, events like Qoyllurit'i might be dismissed as folklore or touristic spectacle. However, such interpretations are profoundly inadequate, as they fail to recognize these movements as legitimate ways of world-making that cannot be fully translated into modern secular categories.

From an anthropological perspective, Escobar and others associated with the ontological turn have suggested that we must sometimes accept that different cultures inhabit different worlds, not just the same world with different beliefs about it. This radical view implies that trying to force phenomena like Daesoon or Qoyllurit'i into our categories (religion, culture, politics, etc.) might distort them. Instead, we might let them teach us new categories. Bruno Latour (1993), as mentioned, argued that moderns never truly separated nature and culture—it was an intellectual purification that never matched reality. In practice, modern societies constantly create "hybrids". What Latour calls for is a symmetrical anthropology where we don't assume in advance that modern secular people have a more objective grasp on reality than religious practitioners. If we apply that symmetry, we might say: What if *Haewon-sangsaeng* is as real a principle for understanding the world as, say, the law of thermodynamics? *Haewon-sangsaeng* certainly explains some aspects of human experience (cycles of vengeance or the healing power of forgiveness) better than any physical law could. For Daesoon adherents, it is a truth that has predictive and explanatory power. The Western ontological framework tends to filter such principles out as "moral belief" rather than "knowledge," but a symmetrical approach would grant that principle a space in describing reality—perhaps as part of a pluriverse (Escobar 2016) of many coexisting ontologies.

Daesoon Jinrihoe translates its grand cosmology into a durable ethical community

through intertwined activities of cultivation, ritual, aesthetics, and institutional embodiment. Rather than separating "belief" from social service or "doctrine" from public life, the movement coordinates its philosophical and moral formation across childhood programs, adult disciplines, temple-based arts, and a dense welfare–education infrastructure. Read through relational-ontology approaches, Daesoon's integration of the Four Tenets in every individual and collective endeavor refuses the modern nature/culture split and treats these domains as ontologically collaborative and interdependent rather than auxiliary. Moreover, every endeavor is deeply rooted in—and develops from—the very core of the Tenets. This framing clarifies why prayer cycles, temple arts, and welfare provision are not discrete spheres but co-implicated modes of world-making.

Both Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i illustrate that resilience is not a passive endurance but an active principle of their cosmologies. Daesoon Jinrihoe's ability to grow and maintain institutional vitality is not a happy accident; it stems from the movement's intrinsic logic that emphasizes reconciliation and adaptability. The principle of *Haewon-sangsaeng* explicitly does not shy away from conflict or suffering—it confronts it and uses it as material for creating mutual life. For Daesoon Jinrihoe, the commitment to a cosmos that is just and harmonious means that modern injustices like colonialism or social inequality are interpreted not simply as sociopolitical problems but as cosmic imbalances—and thus they have cosmic solutions. This means that when Daesoon faces external pressures, its default response is to seek a way to resolve and incorporate, rather than fragment. This gives a powerful internal impetus to overcome obstacles coherently and can galvanize action in ways that secular frameworks might not.

In sum, Daesoon Jinrihoe's doctrinal holism and relational ontology recasts Korea's religious heritage into a new constellation aimed at cultural and cosmic revitalization. The movement constructs an alternative ontology where cosmic justice, rather than secular progress, is the ultimate aim of human activity. By teaching that the universe has moral structure and that humans in community with gods and other non-human entities can actively recalibrate that structure, Daesoon Jinrihoe empowers its followers in a relational ontology to view themselves as agents of a coming Great Transformation. This worldview was, and remains, a source of profound hope and meaning, especially in a society that had experienced colonization, war, and rapid modernization. It asserts that modernity's disasters are not the end of the story—there is a way to weave the torn threads of the cosmos back together through ethical and spiritual world-making.

Placed in comparative relief, the Andean pilgrimage of Qoyllurit'i exhibits a cognate pattern: ritualized reciprocity sustains a more-than-human polity while accommodating heritage management and climate constraints (Salas Carreño 2014; Kania 2019; de la Cadena 2010). Following Marisol de la Cadena insights (2010), events like Qoyllurit'i enact a cosmopolitics where the modern distinctions between religious and secular, or human and nature, do not apply—the community includes the mountain and the stars as social and political actors. As one Quechua leader poignantly explained, "the

mountains, the rivers, the rain, etc.—all are related like a family… this place is not where we are from, it is who we are" (de la Cadena 2010, 354). Rather than a syncretic compromise, Qoyllurit'i represents a creative revitalization of the Andean cosmos under the sign of Christianity—a ritual assertion that the sacred landscape remains alive despite colonial conversion. Without collapsing cases, this parallel underscores that Daesoon's integration of aesthetics, ritual, and welfare is best read as an ontological resistance rather than a merely sociological adaptation.

Within this framework, ethical action is not merely symbolic; it is cosmologically efficacious. Classical Daesoon sources and scholarly syntheses articulate the transformation of the practitioner into a *perfected being*, situating salvation within an imminent horizon rather than a deferred afterlife. Moreover, scholars note that Daesoon's ethic scales beyond the human: *Haewon-sangsaeng* underwrites proposals for ecological civilization and articulates obligations toward non-human animals, extending reciprocity to broader ecologies (Wang 2022; Rutana 2024). These more-than-human commitments cohere with the movement's claim that moral practice recalibrates a wider cosmic order and form an internally consistent ontology that offers explanations and solutions for human suffering radically different from those of liberal secular society. Rather than being reducible to "coping mechanisms" or "charismatic religiosity," Daesoon Jinrihoe articulates a vision of the world that competes with, and provides an alternative to, the dominant modern worldview. In other words, it is not just surviving modernity; it is talking back to modernity. Its ethical creativity posits that true progress is not measured by technological advancement or individual wealth, but by the moral and spiritual restoration of a world out of balance. This is a fundamentally different teleology than that of modern secular progress. Daesoon Jinrihoe's success in South Korea (becoming one of the largest faith communities) challenges the idea that modernization necessarily secularizes or homogenizes culture. Instead, it suggests modernity in Korea took on a distinct form: deeply shaped by indigenous religious innovation.

When Qoyllurit'i pilgrims invoke *apus,* Christ and Virgin Mary while offering to *Pachamama*, they are likewise asserting a pluriversal logic. Dussel and Escobar would likely view these phenomena as signs of "alternatives to modernity that are already present." These are not romanticized noble savages nor failed modernizations; rather, they are living proof that modernity itself can be reimagined from the Global South. In Dussel's words, the transmodernity evident in these phenomena is bringing together different experiences from across the world, not only those of Western civilization. The fact that Qoyllurit'i has persisted and even expanded in the late 20th and early 21st centuries (with growing attendance and recognition) indicates that it addresses needs and experiences that modernity, in its state or market forms, does not fulfill for the participants. Likewise, the persistence and appeal of Daesoon Jinrihoe show that people are seeking something beyond what that rhetoric offers. South Korea is one of the most technologically advanced, modernized countries, yet the growth of an indigenous

spiritual movement indicates that something in the modern/secular order was incomplete or alienating for many, whether it be a craving for holistic meaning, community, or a moral vision that pure material progress did not satisfy. Similarly, in the Andes, even after centuries of Christianization and state modernization efforts, indigenous cosmologies thrive because they offer a sense of rootedness and reciprocity that the official modern culture often lacks (de la Cadena 2010).

One could ask: do relational ontologies have a contribution to make in addressing global crises (like environmental degradation, social inequality)? Many argue yes, because they inherently treat the nonhuman world with respect and see human flourishing as tied to nonhuman well-being. This is precisely the sort of alternative epistemology that relational worldviews offer: knowledge that prioritizes balance, continuity, and reciprocity. In a time when many feel the Western model of modernity is in crisis (climate crisis, spiritual void, extreme polarization), these revitalized cosmologies present not just a refuge for their adherents but potentially a toolkit of concepts and practices that others might learn from. For example, rituals of reconciliation and forgiveness could inspire new forms of conflict resolution beyond legalistic approaches; the idea of continuous communication with the divine/natural world could foster more participatory environmental governance (with local communities speaking for rivers and mountains, akin to legal rights for nature movements).

In summary, examining Daesoon Jinrihoe and Qoyllurit'i side by side compels us to reconsider assumptions of what is "modern" and what is "good" for societies. These movements underscore that modernity, as commonly defined, does not have a monopoly on reason, ethics, or progress. They remind scholars and policymakers alike that there exist plural modernities or even paths beyond modernity—what Dussel (2005) would call transmodern options—that integrate ancient wisdom with novel creativity. The relational ontologies embodied in these practices are not about rejecting airplanes, smartphones, or democratic institutions; they are about reimagining the cosmological narrative in which those things operate. They offer a narrative where community and cosmos are reunited, where moral and material are not divorced. The value of that narrative is not just in exotic religiosity, but in its potential to inspire more humane, sustainable ways of life.

Conflict of Interest

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

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Kang Jeungsan's Edification through Literature: A Reinterpretation of Jeungsan's Edification Cases through a Multidisciplinary Theoretical Framework

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Original Articles

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Abstract

This study offers an in-depth analysis—through literary theory and multidisciplinary methodologies—of how Kang Jeungsan (姜甑山, 1871–1909) employed literary media to disseminate religious teachings and edify the populace. Jeungsan's edification transcended simple knowledge transmission; it fostered an integrated theory of edification that moved the heart to internalize the knowledge (知) attained and to practice it actively in everyday life. Drawing on Thomas Groome's religious-educational model of Shared Christian Praxis, Jeong Un-chae's narrative theory in bibliotherapy, Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and conscientization, reception aesthetics, and language-arts pedagogy, this research systematically illuminates Jeungsan's edification process. Jeungsan conveyed his teachings in compressed and symbolic forms across diverse literary genres—classical Chinese poetry (漢詩), *Donghak gasa* (didactic verse), and incantatory formulae (*jumun*)—and implemented tailored edification adapted to the individual characteristics of his disciples. His literary mode of edification sought a conscientization oriented simultaneously toward personal inner transformation and the transformation of society at large, maintaining nonviolent pacifism on the foundation of haewon-sangsaeng (Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence). This research offers significant theoretical and practical implications across modern pedagogy, religious studies, and bibliotherapy, providing valuable insights for overcoming the fragmentation of contemporary education and for realizing holistic education.

Keywords: Kang Jeungsan; theory of edification; classical Chinese poetry; *Donghak gasa*; *jumun* (incantation); critical pedagogy; reception aesthetics; bibliotherapy

Introduction

Religious teachings are essentially transmitted through language and are deeply intertwined with literary expression. In particular, the religious movements that emerged during Korea's modern transformations left significant marks on literary history, often employing literary forms to achieve the purpose of edification.

Scriptures are the embodiment of metaphysical value systems shaped by religion, clothed in the garments of language; thus, it is impossible to conceive of a religion without scriptures. These scriptures fully employ the linguistic structures of literature, while literature itself has often unconsciously borrowed from religious value systems (Choi 1991, 94). Legendary tales of founders' lives emerged spontaneously, spreading widely through traditional archetypes that anticipated the advent of sages or heroes. Compiling such legends into vernacular scriptures represented a radical literary transformation, bringing religious movements deeply into the domain of literature and leaving enduring traces in its history (Cho 2005, 11–12).

Kang Jeungsan (姜甑山, 1871–1909) was a great religious thinker who lived at the turn of the 20th century, when Korea opened its doors to foreign powers and just before the nation's annexation by Japan. Within a Joseon society dominated by Zhu Xi's Neo-Confucian feudal order, Kang synthesized the essence of Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Western religions. He then introduced a new philosophy suited for the Later World (後天), centered on the principles of *Gaebyeok* (開闢, Great Opening) and *Sangsaeng* (相生, Mutual Beneficence), which he named the Heavenly and Earthly Great Dao (天地大道). His philosophy followed the cosmological cycle of conceiving and bearing (胞胎), Nurturing and cultivating (養生), and bathing and dressing (浴帶), culminating in the era of maturing and prospering (冠旺). As the completion of "True Donghak," his teachings overcame the problems and failures of the original Donghak movement and were transmitted to the people as a transformative religious model.

Before embarking on his great salvific mission, Kang Jeungsan expressed his educational will and sense of duty by founding two village schools (*Acts* 1:20, *Acts* 2: 1), where he taught young pupils eager to learn. After completing his studies at Daewonsa Temple on Mount Moak, he continued to nurture the intellectual curiosity of his followers, grounding his instruction in human transformation and emotional cultivation. These activities transcended mere pedagogy, elevating him into a religious figure of reverence and eventually divinization. His teachings did not merely convey knowledge but sought to move hearts, inspiring awe and elevating the essential emotions and rational faculties of human beings. His journey of the Great Itineration (大巡) thus reflects his effort to pioneer such a religious and literary path.

In line with the age of *Gwanwang* (冠旺), Kang Jeungsan stressed that teachings must not remain at the cognitive level of philosophy. Instead, acquired knowledge must be internalized, emotionally absorbed, and actively practiced in daily life. Consequently, his edification employed diverse methods, and this article investigates such aspects of

his transformative teachings.

Previous research on Kang Jeungsan, particularly regarding his use of literature, has often been limited to fragmentary studies of classical Chinese poetry or incantations (Kim 1994), lacking an integrated theoretical framework. This study seeks to overcome these limitations by adopting a multidisciplinary perspective and proposing a comprehensive interpretive framework. By doing so, it clarifies how Kang Jeungsan employed literature as a vehicle to open the age of *Injon* (人尊, The nobility of Humanity) and the principle of *Seongsa Jaein* (成事在人, "Heaven will contrive and man will achieve"). Moreover, it examines how literature functioned in the methods and significance of his nine-year-long Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth (天地公事).

Edification as the Core of Jeungsan's Thought and its Methodological Diversity

To understand Jeungsan's (Kang Jeungsan's) thought, edification (敎化 *Kr. gyohwa*) is a central concept. Before embarking on his mission to "renew the world," Jeungsan worked as an educator, founding village schools to teach young pupils. After completing his studies at Daewonsa Temple, he turned to his followers, not merely transmitting intellectual knowledge but cultivating practical edification through the transformation of the heart. This process was embodied in the nine-year-long *Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth* (天地公事 *Kr. Cheonji Gongsa*), which sought to establish the Heavenly and Earthly Great Dao (天地大道) in the universe. It unfolded through a progressive sequence—from Dao (道) to virtue (德), then to transformation and nurture (化育蒼生)—and employed literary means such as classical Chinese poetry (漢詩 *Kr. hansi*), *Donghak Gasa* (Eastern Learning Songs), and incantations (*jumun*). Grounded in the principle of resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence (解冤相生 *Kr. haewon sangsaeng*) and in nonviolent pacifism, his pedagogy was personalized to each disciple's character, emphasizing not external form but the inner spiritual force of Sincerity, Respectfulness, and Faithfulness (誠敬信 *Kr. Seong-gyeong-sin*). In harmony with nature, Jeungsan guided his followers toward spiritual cultivation and awakened to the interrelation between the divine and the human—a truly holistic edification. Jeungsan was deeply critical of the educational realities of late Joseon society. He declared:

> The purpose of teaching people by founding schools all over the world is to resolve grievances of both divine beings and human beings. This is done by perfecting the Three Realms and greatly enlightening the world. However, the present schooling makes learners bend solely upon the desire for fame or wealth. Therefore, I made the realization of the Dao something that is to be completed outside of the present frame" (*Progress of the Order* 1:17)

Here Jeungsan identifies the problem of contemporary schooling: it trapped students in the pursuit of fame and profit. Education, he argued, must begin with human nature and moral cultivation, followed by professional training appropriate to one's talents. Since the true purpose of schools was to contribute to the civilization of the world—grounded in resolving divine grievances, education must integrate spiritual and material dimensions. Instead, late Joseon schools had lapsed into an excessive focus on material civilization and utilitarian training. Thus Jeungsan emphasized that education must go beyond instruction (敎 *Kr.gyo*) to include transformation (化 *Kr.hwa*), inspiring learners to embody the Dao.

Accordingly, Jeungsan insisted that both Eastern and Western learning shared the same ultimate purpose: edification. As he stated:

> There was a great sage in the West, His teachings are called 'Western Learning';
> There was a great sage in the East, His teachings are called 'Eastern Learning.'
> They both intended to edify people. (*Acts* 5:38)

Here Jeungsan underscores that beyond regional distinctions, the essential aim of learning was always edification, guiding people toward righteousness.

He further articulated a systematic process of edification:

> It is said that there is the Dao (曰有道);
> As there was the Dao, there came to be virtue(道有德);
> As there was virtue, there came to be transformation(德有化);
> As there was transformation, there came to be nurture(化有育);
> As there was nurture, there came to be creatures(育有蒼生);
> As there were creatures, there came to be a myriad(蒼生有億兆);
> As there was a myriad, there came to be the wish for coronation(億兆有願戴);
> As there was the wish for coronation, there came to be Tang Yao.(願戴有唐堯)
> (*Progress of the Order* 1:66)

This passage shows Jeungsan's vision that Dao must generate virtue, which in turn enables the transformation and nurturing of beings. By recalling Emperor Yao of ancient China, he emphasized how true governance educates and harmonizes the people in both spiritual and material terms, achieving a balance of yin and yang. Just as the ancient people revered Yao, so too could a politics of *muwiyihwa* (無爲而化, The way of changing without need for action) bring about peace and justify the existence of schools today.

For Jeungsan, to recover the Dao (有道 *Kr. yudo*) was to align with righteousness and human ethics. He stressed:

> When the Dao has been recovered, serious illnesses are naturally cured without any medicine, and minor illnesses are naturally cured without any medicine as well. (得其有道 則大病勿藥自效 小病勿藥自效) (*Acts* 5: 38)

And he warned:

> He who forgets morality for his parents is without the Dao;
> He who forgets morality for his sovereign is without the Dao;
> He who forgets morality for his teacher is without the Dao.
> As there is no filial piety, no loyalty, and no fidelity in this world, The whole world is ailing.(*Progress of the Order* 1:66)

Thus Jeungsan connected Dao with ethical life. Edification, for him, meant not only intellectual teaching but inspiring learners to absorb knowledge emotionally and practice it actively in their daily lives. His concept of *gamhwa* (感化, to impress and inspire other people by emotional transformation) encompassed not only cognitive but also affective and spiritual dimensions, elevating the essential sentiments and rational faculties of humanity.

Jeungsan's methods of edification exhibit distinctive characteristics: (1) the use of diverse literary genres; (2) personalized strategies of teaching; (3) a multi-layered communicative structure; and (4) the transformative power of language. He employed classical poetry to deliver compressed symbolic teachings, conveying cosmic insights, prophetic warnings, and moral cultivation. He cited and reinterpreted Donghak Gasa, granting new meanings attuned to his age and highlighting the primacy of "perfected heart" (眞心). He also used incantations (*jumun*), whose performative linguistic force expressed the bond between gods and humans, serving as literary instruments of spiritual transformation. Moreover, Jeungsan tailored his teachings to the unique capacities and personalities of his disciples—anticipating principles of individualized education now emphasized in modern pedagogy. Finally, his literary forms invited active reinterpretation, demonstrating that language possesses transformative power to shape and reconfigure worldviews.

Background and Theoretical Features of the Multidisciplinary Approach

This study adopts a multidisciplinary set of theories in order to systematically analyze Jeungsan's literary pedagogy of edification. The necessity of this approach lies in the fact that Jeungsan's edification was not a mere transmission of religious doctrines, but rather an integrated process encompassing cognitive, affective, and practical dimensions. His pedagogical method already embodied in the late nineteenth century the ideal of holistic education now pursued across many fields of modern pedagogy. To analyze such a complex character within a single theoretical framework risks reducing or distorting its

essence.

In order to understand the multilayered structure of Jeungsan's edification, one must first recognize its composite nature. His edification was at once a literary act of creation and a religious proclamation, an instance of personal counseling and a mode of social intervention, an inheritance of tradition and an innovative creation. Symbolic edification through classical poetry (*han-si*) must be illuminated from the perspective of literary theory; dialogical processes with disciples must be examined from the standpoint of pedagogy; and conscientization aimed at social transformation must be interpreted through critical theory. Only through such multidimensional approaches can the full picture of Jeungsan's pedagogy of edification be drawn and its modern significance accurately evaluated.

In pursuit of the research aims—clarifying the therapeutic function of literature, understanding education as social transformation, analyzing the process of active interpretation, uncovering the literary embodiment of the Haewon-Sangsaeng (Resolution of Grievances and Mutual Beneficence) principle, and identifying the originality of Jeungsan's methods—a systematic application of multidisciplinary theories was employed. Each theory elucidates a particular dimension of Jeungsan's edification while simultaneously revealing its true meaning within an integrated whole. This does not amount to a mechanical application of theories; rather, it represents a creative dialogue in which Jeungsan's practical cases complement the limits of each theory and yield new insights.

To analyze Jeungsan's literary edification from multiple perspectives, this study develops an original methodology that integrates six core theories in a step-by-step fashion. Designed to overcome fragmented approaches, this integrated methodology captures the dynamic totality of Jeungsan's pedagogy. The four-stage process—textual analysis → reception process analysis → edification effect analysis → derivation of social significance—allows for a systematic tracing of Jeungsan's edification as it moves from literary creation through personal transformation to social change.

The theoretical foundation of this four-stage methodology may be located in the cyclical structure of curriculum theory and the concept of the hermeneutic circle. The process of moving from the text, through the responses of the recipients, to concrete transformation is closely related to Gadamer's idea of hermeneutic dialogue as well as Dewey's theory of experiential learning. Each stage is both independent and interconnected, structured to reach deeper levels of understanding through cyclical feedback.

Textual Analysis: The Ontological Power of Language and Symbolic Systems

Theoretical Background and Application of Symbolist Literary Theory

Symbolist literary theory, which emerged in late nineteenth-century France around Charles Baudelaire and Stéphane Mallarmé, was a literary movement that sought to

express inner truth and transcendent reality not through direct description or explanation, but through suggestion and symbolism. At its core lies the recognition that language functions not merely as an instrument of communication but as a medium that reveals invisible spiritual and metaphysical realities(Peyre 1985, 1–17).

Symbolists sought the possibility of a "pure language" that transcended the limits of everyday speech. Through symbolic images and metaphorical expression, they aimed to elicit intuitive understanding and inner awakening in the reader. Mallarmé's declaration that "poetry names nothing but suggests everything," (Peyre 1985, 68–69) and Baudelaire's theory of correspondances (Peyre 1985, 33–34), which posits mysterious linkages among all beings, both reflect the conviction that such connections can be disclosed through language.

This Symbolist aesthetic shows striking parallels with Jeungsan's composition and use of han-shi (classical poetry). His choice of words and construction of imagery transcend surface meaning, embodying a multilayered structure that intimates cosmological order and ontological truth. In particular, his poetic use of the triadic structure of Heaven (天), Earth (地), and Humanity (人) illustrates a Symbolist technique that expands individual experience into a cosmic framework.

Moreover, Jeungsan's symbolic system did not remain at the level of literary technique but functioned as "performative language" that catalyzed real change. This exemplifies the "magical power of language" sought by Symbolism, here realized in a religious context, and also resonates with modern linguistic philosophy, particularly speech act theory. The fact that Jeungsan's prophetic verses were believed to have influenced historical developments attests to the Symbolist insight into the ontological power of language being tested and verified in lived reality.

The Development and Applicability of Contemporary Language Arts Pedagogy

Contemporary language arts pedagogy, shaped in the latter half of the twentieth century under the influence of postmodern educational theory, views language not merely as a tool of communication but as a force that shapes worldviews and transforms existence. Philosophical foundations include Wittgenstein's theory of language games, Heidegger's ontology of language, and Bakhtin's dialogism (Kim 1990, 299–305; Jo 2019, 170–174).

One of its central assumptions is that the use of language not only conveys information but also constitutes and reconstitutes the identities of speaker and listener. Poetic language and metaphorical expression, in particular, dismantle existing frameworks of perception and open new horizons of meaning. From this perspective, language education is understood as a holistic process that goes beyond communicative competence to cultivate imagination, creativity, critical thinking, and reflective consciousness (Kayser 1999, 330–331).

Jeungsan's combined use of classical poetry and ritual incantations (ju-mun) may be interpreted as a comprehensive employment of the aesthetic, spiritual, and

transformative functions of language. The repetitive sound structures of incantations such as the Tae-eul-ju exemplify linguistic performativity that induces altered states of consciousness, while the condensed imagery of his han-shi stimulates disciples' imagination and intuition, leading them toward new modes of self-understanding.

A particularly notable example is Jeungsan's practice of reciting together both Li Bai's Preface to the Peach and Plum Garden (Tao Li Yuan Xu) and sacred incantations. This demonstrates an original integration of literary language that cultivates aesthetic sensitivity and religious language that intensifies spiritual concentration. Such practice exemplifies the multifunctional use of language and the principle of holistic development sought by modern language arts pedagogy, offering an alternative model to the compartmentalized approaches of contemporary education.

Reception Process Analysis: Hermeneutic Dialogue and the Dynamics of Meaning-Making

Hans Robert Jauss's Aesthetics of Reception

Hans Robert Jauss's aesthetics of reception, developed in Germany during the 1960s, is a literary theory grounded in the recognition that the meaning of a text is not determined solely by the author's intention but is completed through the reader's active interpretive process. Central to Jauss's approach is the concept of the horizon of expectations (Erwartungshorizont), which emphasizes that a reader's prior understanding and cultural context play a decisive role in the generation of meaning.(Jauss 1983, 199–204)

In Jauss's theory, literary history is reconstructed not as the history of production but as the history of reception. A single text can be interpreted differently across times and cultures, and these shifting interpretations themselves constitute the true history of literature. The "transformation of the horizon of expectations" explains the process by which readers transcend prior interpretive frameworks and discover new meanings.

This reception-aesthetic perspective is particularly useful for understanding Jeungsan's strategy of reinterpreting Donghak lyrics. His reinterpretation of Choe Su-un's verse was not a mere textual alteration but a deliberate act aimed at fundamentally transforming his disciples' horizon of expectations. What is significant here is that Jeungsan did not discard the existing text but instead creatively reinterpreted it, thereby allowing his disciples to preserve their cultural identity while simultaneously cultivating a new consciousness. This concretely exemplifies what Jauss described as the "dialectic of tradition and innovation," demonstrating an educational wisdom that achieved both cultural continuity and transformative renewal.

Wolfgang Iser's Reader-Response Theory and Interpretive Community

Wolfgang Iser's reader-response theory further developed Jauss's aesthetics of reception by focusing on the interactive process between text and reader. Iser argued

that meaning is generated as readers actively fill in the "gaps" (Leerstelle) inherent in a text, thus transforming themselves from passive receivers of meaning into co-creators of meaning(Iser 1993, 236–238).

Key concepts in Iser's theory include the "implied reader" and the "interpretive community." The implied reader refers to the ideal reader presupposed by the text, and actual readers form their interpretations through an ongoing dialogue with this implied reader. The interpretive community, in turn, consists of groups of readers who share similar cultural backgrounds and interpretive frameworks, explaining how individual interpretations develop into communal meaning.(Iser 1993, 141–142)

The principles of Iser's theory are vividly illustrated in Jeungsan's poetic pedagogy. Examining the verse he composed for his disciple reveals important insights. Although the poem itself employs relatively simple antithesis, its impact was magnified when joined with Kim's personal circumstances of poverty and low self-esteem, producing a profound therapeutic effect.

Even more importantly, the poem extended beyond his disciple's individual experience to form an interpretive community among the disciples. As they witnessed his disciple's transformation, the disciples collectively arrived at a shared interpretation—"inner virtue outweighs external conditions." This demonstrates the dynamic process in which individual experience and communal validation reinforce one another. The formation of such interpretive communities explains how Jeungsan's edification transcended the personal level to engender shifts in collective consciousness.

Analysis of the Effects of Edification: Existential Transformation and Narrative Healing

The Theoretical Background of Thomas Groome's Shared Praxis Model

Thomas Groome's Shared Praxis model of religious education, developed in the 1980s within Catholic religious pedagogy, critiques traditional, didactic modes of instruction and advances a participatory approach grounded in the learner's lived experience and concrete reality. This model is built upon the philosophical foundations of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, Jürgen Habermas's theory of communicative action, and Hans-Georg Gadamer's hermeneutic dialogue. (Groome 1983, 260–266)

The term shared praxis refers to "shared practical wisdom" and designates a dialogical process in which personal experience and communal tradition interact to generate new meaning and practice. Groome systematized this process into five stages: (Groome 1991, 146–148)

1) Present Praxis—recognizing the learner's concrete situation and lived experience
2) Critical Reflection—critically analyzing one's present reality
3) Dialogue with the Christian Tradition—engaging inherited wisdom and values

4) Transformative Vision—imagining new possibilities for life and community
5) Practical Decision—making concrete commitments to action.

At its core, this model affirms that education is not merely the transmission of knowledge but an integrative process that unites life and faith. The concept of praxis highlights the dialectical unity of theory and practice, underscoring that the goal of education extends from knowing to existential transformation. (Groome 2021)

Jeungsan's edification of his disciple Kim Hyeong-Ryeol offers a vivid realization of this model. Jeungsan first grasped Kim's concrete reality—poverty and lack of self-esteem (Stage 1). Instead of imposing direct admonition, he employed poetic questioning to prompt self-reflection (Stage 2). He then engaged traditional values in dialogue, offering an alternative framework of meaning (Stage 3). On this basis, he provided a transformative vision that emphasized the superiority of inner values over external conditions (Stage 4). Finally, Kim was guided to enact genuine changes in his life orientation and demeanor (Stage 5).

Jeong Un-chae's Literary Therapy: Narrative Identity and the Mechanism of Healing

Jeong Un-chae's theory of literary therapy, developed in Korea in the late 1990s, is an original framework grounded in the recognition that human life is essentially narrated and expressed through stories. According to this theory, human identity is constructed as narrative identity, and psychological problems or existential crises originate from being trapped within a "problematic narrative"(Jeong 2006, 304–307; Cho 2015, 17–28).

The central premise of literary therapy is that human beings can achieve fundamental healing by recognizing their inner narratives through language and reconstructing them in a healthier direction. This goes beyond the passive reading or appreciation of literary works; it refers to the active process of restructuring one's own life narrative by engaging with the structures and functions of literary language.

Jeong describes the process of literary therapy in three stages:

1) Recognition of the Problematic Narrative—becoming aware of the negativenarrative patterns one inhabits
2) Exploration of Alternative Narratives—discovering new narrative models through literary works or the experiences of others
3) Internalization of a Healthy Narrative—applying the new narrative to one's own life and reconstructing one's identity.

Jeungsan's prophetic poems concerning the Donghak Peasant Revolution exemplify this therapeutic process. At a time when the people were imprisoned in the destructive narrative that "violent revolution is the only solution," Jeungsan's prophetic verse prompted recognition of the limitations and dangers of that narrative. He then presented a new structure—"violent resistance→inevitable failure→greater suffering"—that

fundamentally reconfigured the disciples' narrative of action.

What is particularly noteworthy is that Jeungsan did not merely negate the existing narrative but affirmed its intent while pointing out its methodological limits. This allowed his disciples to shift their narratives without losing self-respect. In this way, Jeungsan's pedagogy illustrates what Jeong calls the strengthening of narrative immunity—the cultivation of inner resilience that enables individuals to sustain a healthy narrative even in the face of external shocks.

Deriving Social Significance: Critical Consciousness and Liberative Pedagogy

Paulo Freire's Critical Pedagogy and the Theory of Conscientization

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, developed in the context of adult literacy education in Brazil during the 1960s, fundamentally critiques the "banking model of education," which regards education as the mere "depositing" of knowledge into passive learners. Freire argued that such a traditional model reduces learners to inert objects, thereby reproducing existing structures of social oppression. As an alternative, he proposed problem-posing education, which fosters active engagement and transformation.(Freire 2018, 101–108)

The central concept in Freire's theory is conscientization (conscientização), the process by which individuals critically perceive the social realities that shape their lives and develop the agency to transform those realities. This is not merely an intellectual awakening but a holistic transformation that culminates in concrete action and praxis. Freire describes three stages of this process:

1) Magical Consciousness—a passive state in which reality is accepted as fate
2) Naïve Consciousness—an awareness of problems without recognition of their structural causes
3) Critical Consciousness—the recognition of structural contradictions and the awakening of agency to enact change.

A cornerstone of Freire's educational philosophy is dialogue. True education, he maintained, occurs not in hierarchical, vertical relationships between teacher and student, but in horizontal, reciprocal encounters where both become co-learners. In such dialogical education, the teacher becomes one who poses problems, and the learner becomes one who thinks critically. Furthermore, the content of education must not consist of abstract knowledge detached from lived experience, but of generative words directly rooted in the learner's life-world (Kim et al. 2017, 22–28).

Jeungsan's pedagogical practice displays striking parallels to these principles of Freire's critical pedagogy. His critique of contemporary schooling—that it led students to "fall only into base pursuits such as official salaries and petty profit"—corresponds exactly to Freire's denunciation of the banking model of education. Likewise, Jeungsan's

practice of posing questions to his disciples rather than providing them with ready-made answers, stands as a quintessential example of problem-posing education.

Socio-Transformative Education and Liberative Praxis

The ultimate goal of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy is the transformation of social structures through the awakening of individual consciousness. This perspective stands in opposition to liberal views of education as a politically neutral act. Instead, Freire argued that education is inherently political, always serving either to maintain existing structures or to bring about their transformation. From this perspective, genuine education must take the form of cultural action. Cultural action is not the passive transmission of inherited traditions, but rather the dismantling of oppressive cultural forms and the creative construction of liberative alternatives.

Jeungsan's pedagogy strongly embodies the character of such cultural action. He rejected both the rigid Confucian order and the uncritical reception of Western modernity, instead offering a creative synthesis of the strengths of East and West as the foundation for a new cultural paradigm. Particularly notable is his reinterpretation of the *Donghak gasa* (Hymns of the Eastern Learning), through which he dismantled religious authoritarianism and highlighted the agency of common people. In doing so, Jeungsan sought to reconfigure cultural hegemony itself, opening the possibility for an emancipatory reorientation of society.

Codification and Decodification: Pedagogical Methodologies of Critical Awareness

Freire proposed *codification* and *decodification* as the central methodological tools of conscientization. Codification is the process of compressing learners' existential situations into symbolic images or problem-posing scenarios. Decodification, in turn, is the critical analysis of those codes to reveal the contradictions and possibilities hidden within them. (Kim et al. 2017, 122–124)

For codification to be effective, the situation presented must be familiar enough to resonate with learners, while simultaneously offering a new perspective. Such codified representations allow learners to objectify their own lived experience, thereby creating critical distance and enabling reflective insight. In the process of decodification, learners collectively engage in dialogue to analyze their situation from multiple angles and explore pathways toward transformation.

Jeungsan's poetry offers refined examples of such codification. Through symbolic verses, he presented disciples with reframed visions of their own reality, enabling them to see beyond fatalistic resignation. This process led disciples to recognize their own capacity for agency and transformation. It stands as a quintessential instance of conscientization in Freire's sense—where individual awakening expands into collective solidarity and ultimately into social praxis.

The Synergistic Effects and Limitations of the Integrated Methodology

The six theoretical frameworks examined above were not applied to Jeungsan's pedagogy in a merely parallel fashion but instead achieved an organic integration. Symbolism and the theory of language arts education elucidated the linguistic features of Jeungsan's texts; reception aesthetics traced the disciples' active processes of interpretation; shared praxis and literary therapy analyzed the transformative effects of his pedagogy; and critical pedagogy evaluated its broader social significance.

The greatest strength of this integrated approach is that it enables a multidimensional understanding of the layered structure of Jeungsan's edification. It allows us to grasp comprehensively the complex nature of his pedagogy—literary and religious, personal and social, traditional and innovative—which could not be adequately captured by any single theoretical framework. Furthermore, the shortcomings of one theory were compensated for by the strengths of others, resulting in a richer and more accurate analysis.

Nevertheless, this multidisciplinary approach is not without its limitations. Above all, in the process of integrating theories developed within disparate academic traditions, there is a risk of overlooking the unique contexts or subtle nuances inherent in each theory. Moreover, applying modern Western theoretical frameworks to the specific circumstances of late nineteenth-century Korea carries the possibility of interpretive distortion due to temporal and cultural differences.

To overcome these limitations, continuous reflection and supplementation are required. In particular, it is necessary to deepen the dialogue between Eastern intellectual traditions and Western theoretical systems, and to maintain a balanced approach that does not reduce the originality of Jeungsan's pedagogy to existing theories, while still evaluating its modern significance with precision. Through such methodological reflection, research on Jeungsan's edification can yield more refined and persuasive results.

Textual Analysis of Jeungsan's Edification

Symbolist Literary Theory and Jeungsan's Poetic Symbolism

In Symbolist literary theory, a symbol is defined as "a means of implicitly expressing metaphysical or mystical content." Jeungsan's Chinese poetry (han-shi) embodies this aesthetic with remarkable precision.

> Heaven is not known above in Heaven, Earth is not known down upon the Earth,and humanity is not known among humanity. To where should I return?
> 天上無知天 地下無知地 人中無知人 何處歸 (*Acts* 3: 42)

This verse reflects Jeungsan's profound spiritual insight through the triad of Heaven

(天 *Kr.Cheon*), Earth (地 *Kr. Ji*), and Humanity (人 *Kr. In*). It laments that there is no true understanding of Heaven, Earth, or Humanity, and in doing so expresses the Sangje's own transcendent perspective. In this poem, Heaven, Earth, and Humanity bear multilayered meanings: Heaven signifies transcendent order, Earth the realm of historical reality, and Humanity the creative agent who fulfills cosmic order through self-realization.

Jeungsan's symbolic use of language also extended to prophetic discourse. When Jeon Bong-jun (全琫準), outraged by government oppression, rallied Donghak followers into an armed uprising, the social climate grew increasingly turbulent as anger spread and the movement intensified. At that moment, Jeungsan foresaw the futility of their endeavor. One summer day, he had his disciples memorize the following prophetic verse:

> As the moon falls dark and wild geese fly high, Chanyu will flee during the night.
> As the swift cavalry is about to chase after him, heavy snow will cover both the bows and the swords
> (月黑雁飛高 單于夜遁逃 欲將輕騎逐 大雪滿弓刀)(*Acts* 1:23)

Through this prophetic poem, Jeungsan revealed that the Donghak armies would meet defeat in the winter snows and warned his disciples not to join. Indeed, later that winter, the Donghak forces were decisively crushed by government troops, while those who followed Jeungsan's counsel were spared from calamity.

Symbolically, the imagery unfolds across several layers: *"dark moon"* (月黑) represents the chaotic turmoil of the age; "*geese flying high*" (雁飛高) signifies intuitive responses to danger; and *"the enemy chief fleeing by night"* (單于夜遁逃) symbolizes the disintegration of the established power structure. Through this symbolic structure, Jeungsan offered more than mere prediction—he conveyed profound insights into the essence of history and the governing principles of human action.

The Donghak Peasant Revolution of 1894 (*Gabo Year*) shook late Joseon society with its calls to "eradicate oppression and save the people" (除暴救民 *Kr. je-pok-gu-min*), "support the nation and comfort the people" (輔國安民 *Kr.bo-guk-an-min*), and "expel the West and repel Japan" (斥洋斥倭 *Kr.cheok-yang-cheok-wae*). Yet despite its just cause, the movement did not unfold peacefully. Its escalation provoked the intervention of Japan and Qing China, culminating in the Sino-Japanese War and plunging Korea into deeper turmoil. In contrast, Jeungsan consistently upheld a pacifist orientation, seeking to resolve both domestic and international crises on the foundation of *haewon sangsaeng* (解冤相生, resolving grievances and fostering mutual life). Thus, while acknowledging the noble intentions of the Donghak movement, Jeungsan guided his disciples away from participation, employing the symbolic language of prophecy as a means of edification.

Contemporary Theories of Language-Arts Pedagogy and Jeungsan's Transformative Use of Language

Contemporary theories of language arts education hold that language is not merely a tool of communication but an ontological force that shapes and transforms worldviews. Jeungsan's use of *ju-mun* (incantations or sacred chants) provides a pioneering example of such a conception of language. The *ju-mun* that he composed or employed often appear as significant elements within his *Cheonji Gongsa* (天地公事, Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth), functioning as a distinct literary genre with transformative power. Jeungsan himself clarified the efficacy of *ju-mun* in one of his teachings:

> One day, Sangje told His two disciples, Ryu Chan-Myeong and Kim Ja-Hyeon, to stand before Him, and ordered each to propagate His virtuous teachings to 100,000 people. Chan-Myeong accepted His order, but Ja-Hyeon did not answer until Sangje urged him again. In the end, Ja-Hyeon obeyed His order. Then Sangje said, "I will subjugate and pacify the world and you shall rule it. Fifty Year Holy Works will be needed for your rule. All devotees should each propagate My virtuous teachings to six people. I already tested the Tae-eul Mantra and the Wunjang Mantra. I resolved Kim Byeong-Wuk's calamity through the Tae-eul Mantra and Jang Hyo-Sun's rampage through the Wunjang Mantra."(*Acts* 3: 31)

Another record relates:

> Hwang Eung-Jong offered Sangje a yellowish chicken. Sangje had Hyeong-Ryeol slaughter the chicken and boil it at night, and He shared it with Kim Hyeong-Ryeol, Han Gong-Suk, Ryu Chan-Myeong, Kim Ja-Hyeon, Kim Gap-Chil, Kim Song-Hwan, Kim Gwang-Chan, and Hwang Eung-Jong. He wrote the Wunjang Mantra, having them memorize it all at once. This is the Wunjang Mantra as it was known at that time: cheon-ha-yeong-wung Gwan-wun-jang ui-mak-cheo geun-cheong-cheon-ji-pal-wi-je-jang yuk-jeong-yuk-gab yuk-byeong-yuk-eul so-sol-je-jang il-byeol-byeong-yeong sa-gui-eum-eum geup-geup-yeo-ryul-ryeong-sa-ba-ah
> [天下英雄關雲長 依幕處 近聽天地八位諸將 六丁六甲六丙六乙所率諸將 一別屛營 邪鬼唵唵唸唸如律令娑婆啊 The great hero under Heaven, Guan Yunchang who resides in his command-tent, I politely pray that you have the Eight Directional Generals of Heaven and Earth, Six Jeong, Six Gab, Six Byeong, Six Eul, all your generals and special forces exorcise demons fast. Om om promptly comply with this divine command saba-ah]. (*Progress of the Order* 1: 22)

From this, we can see that Jeungsan composed the *Unjang ju* in connection with the deity Guan Yu, invoking his aid through the medium of sacred chant. Its purpose was not only ritual but also practical: to draw upon divine power to resolve crises in the human realm. Jeungsan employed such *ju-mun* repeatedly, demonstrating their versatility in addressing both personal misfortunes and collective upheavals. The ritualistic nature of these incantations illustrates his pedagogy of *sin-in sanggwanseong*

(神人相關性), the principle of divine–human interrelation, in which the human world cannot be separated from the realm of spirits. In this sense, *ju-mun* served both as religious instruction and as affective edification.

The *Tae-eul ju*, for instance, operated on two levels: on the auditory level, its repetitive rhythm heightened concentration; on the semantic level, its invocation of *Tae-eul Cheonsang Wongun* (太乙天上元君), a cosmic being, fostered a sense of communion with the universe. Jeungsan thus emphasized that *ju-mun* were not merely prayers but "language that creates new realities." In practice, he often combined the chanting of classical Chinese poetry—such as Li Bai's *Prologue to the Peach and Plum Garden* (桃李園序 *Kr. Doriwonseo*)—with *ju-mun*. This integration cultivated disciples' aesthetic sensibilities through poetry while simultaneously deepening their spiritual focus through chant. In this way, Jeungsan's approach exemplified the transformative dimension of language arts: uniting beauty and spirituality, literature and ritual, to effect both inner renewal and cosmic harmony.

Reception Process Analysis of Jeungsan's Edification: Reception Aesthetics and Jeungsan's Reader-Response Edification

Hans Robert Jauss's concept of the "horizon of expectation" (*Erwartungshorizont*) provides a crucial key to understanding Jeungsan's literary edification strategies. A striking example is his reinterpretation of Choi Su-un's *Donghak kasa*.

> In The Songs of Suwun, there is a saying, "If the energy of the Dao is maintained for a long time, wickedness cannot enter [道氣長存邪不入]." However, I say, "If a perfected heart is adamantly guarded, blessings will come first [眞心堅守福先來]." (*Dharma* 2: 3)

This reframing marked a decisive shift in the horizon of expectation. In Su-un's time, the prevailing horizon placed emphasis on reliance upon a transcendent force (道氣 *Kr.do-gi*, the energy of the Way), cultivating a dependence on external safeguards with only limited acknowledgment of individual agency. Jeungsan, however, transformed this horizon by foregrounding true heart (眞心 *Kr. jinshim*) as an inner human capacity. In doing so, he repositioned the locus of religious efficacy from the external to the internal, from passive waiting for supernatural protection to active cultivation of sincerity as the generative source of blessing.

The effect of this reception-aesthetic strategy was profound. Disciples moved from a self-understanding of *"I am a passive being who awaits help from beyond"* to *"My perfected heart itself is the driving force of transformation."* In other words, Jeungsan's reinterpretation reoriented their agency, creating an entirely new horizon in which human subjectivity and ethical volition became central.

Wolfgang Iser's notion of the "interpretive community" further illuminates Jeungsan's

practice. His poetry did not simply address isolated individuals but forged a shared interpretive space among disciples. A notable example is the poem he composed for Kim Hyeong-Ryeol. On the surface, it offered Kim personal comfort and encouragement, helping him recover self-respect despite poverty and social humiliation. Yet this poem also functioned collectively: other disciples who witnessed Kim's transformation drew a common interpretive conclusion—*"What matters most is not external conditions but inner integrity and sincerity."*

Thus, Jeungsan's poetry catalyzed a multi-layered reader-response process. The first-order reader, Kim Hyeong-Ryeol, received the poem as direct consolation and reorientation of his self-understanding. The second-order readers, the wider disciple community, confirmed the poem's efficacy by observing Kim's change and reinterpreting the message for themselves. Out of this dynamic emerged an interpretive community in which individual experience and collective affirmation mutually reinforced one another.

The result was not merely aesthetic appreciation but a unique fusion of literary emotion and religious awakening. Jeungsan's poetic language created a participatory horizon of meaning, enabling disciples to experience both literary resonance and spiritual transformation as an integrated process.

Edification Effect Analysis of Jeungsan's Edification

Groome's Shared Praxis Model and the Case of Kim Hyeong-Ryeol

Jeungsan's edification can be concretely illustrated through the case of his disciple Kim Hyŏng-ryŏl, which aligns precisely with the fivefold stages of Thomas Groome's Shared Praxis model: naming present praxis, critical reflection, dialogue with tradition, vision for transformation, and decision for action.

Jeungsan first discerned Kim's outward conditions—poverty and shabby appearance—as well as his inner state—lack of self-esteem and despair. This corresponds to Groome's emphasis on "a deep understanding of the learner's life context." Rather than offering direct admonition, Jeungsan posed an implicit question: *"Does your present appearance truly define who you are?"*—a question that compelled Kim to reflect upon his own situation.

Jeungsan then reinforced this reflective process with a symbolic poem:

> Filthy, worn clothing is safer than metal armor;
> A crumbling house and overgrown fence seems an impenetrable castle.
> [弊衣多垢勝金甲 頹屋無垣似鐵城] (*Acts* 3: 48)

This verse, composed specifically for Kim, conveys that even if one's clothing is worn and stained, the inner posture of Sincerity, Respectfulness and Faithfulness (誠敬信 *Kr seong-gyeong-sin*) can prevail over material strength; likewise, a crumbling house may embody greater security than a fortress if supported by inner resolve. Thus, the poem

teaches that external appearance is secondary to the inner moral and spiritual strength of the individual.

Through this, Jeungsan engaged with the Confucian tradition of intrinsic value but simultaneously transcended it by proposing a new value system grounded in sincerity and spiritual resilience (LEE 2022, 121–131). For Kim, this was not merely consolation but a call to ontological transformation. The result was a tangible change in his attitude: he no longer succumbed to external conditions but cultivated inner strength.

This case represents both an individual embodiment of the *haewon-sangsaeng* narrative (from grievance, i.e., inferiority, to mutual beneficence, i.e., restored dignity) and a concrete instance of the conscientization process emphasized in Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy. Kim's transformation illustrates the movement from the resolution of personal grievance (overcoming inferiority) to the establishment of mutual beneficence (recovering self-respect), thereby exemplifying Jeungsan's method of literary edification as a practice of inner renewal with wider social implications.

Jung Un-Chae's Literary Therapy and Jeungsan's Narrative Healing

Jung Un-Chae's theory of literary therapy holds that fundamental healing occurs when individuals transform their "problematic narratives" into "healthy narratives." Jeungsan's methods of edification provide a sophisticated example of such narrative transformation. At a time when the populace was trapped in the narrative that "violent revolution is the only solution for social change," Jeungsan redirected this discourse through prophetic poetry related to the Donghak Peasant Movement:

> As the moon falls dark and wild geese fly high, Chanyu will flee during the night.
> As the swift cavalry is about to chase after him, heavy snow will cover both the bows and the swords
> [月黑雁飛高 單于夜遁逃 欲將輕騎逐 大雪滿弓刀] (*Acts* 1: 23)

The Donghak Peasant Uprising of 1894 was a watershed moment in late Joseon, launched under slogans such as *"expel the corrupt and save the people"* (*Kr.je-pok-gu-min*), *"support the nation and bring peace to the people"* (*Kr.bo guk an min*), and *"expel the Westerners and the Japanese"* (*Kr.cheok-yang-cheok-wae*). While its intent was to repel foreign powers and rescue the Korean people, the movement soon entangled the nation in greater chaos, including foreign interventions and the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War. In this turbulent context, Jeungsan rejected violent resistance, adhering instead to a nonviolent, pacifist path, grounded in *haewon* (resolution of grievances) and *sangsaeng* (mutual beneficence). Through the prophetic verse above, he warned his followers that although the aims of Donghak were noble, joining the armed revolt would ultimately lead to ruin.

This poem effectively restructured his disciples' narrative framework from one of "violent resistance → inevitable defeat → greater suffering" into an alternative vision that

disarmed despair and instilled confidence in a different path. When the Donghak forces were indeed defeated, Jeungsan's disciples did not collapse into hopelessness but instead affirmed, *"We are following another way."* This resilience corresponds to what Jung describes as "narrative immunity"—the capacity to withstand despair through an alternative, healthier story.

Jeungsan also employed introspective poetry to heal individual narratives. A verse he composed at the age of seven illustrates this:

> Heaven is not known above in Heaven, Earth is not known down upon the Earth, and humanity is not known among humanity. To where should I return? [天上無知天 地下無知地 人中無知人 何處歸] (*Acts* 3: 42)

Here, Jeungsan articulates the absence of true understanding of heaven, earth, and humanity, lamenting the lack of wisdom and simultaneously expressing his own expansive vision. Through this poem, he guided his disciples away from the complacent narrative—*"I already know enough"*—toward a growth-oriented narrative: *"I am still on the journey of discovering my true self."*

Such transformations exemplify how Jeungsan's pedagogy shifted narratives from one of resentment and violent struggle to one of peaceful transformation and mutual flourishing. Furthermore, these narrative shifts expanded from the personal to the collective level, linking individual healing with social renewal. This dynamic illustrates Jung Un-Chae's central claim that literary therapy enables narrative transformations which transcend private recovery and encompass broader social healing.

Edification Effect Analysis of Jeungsan's Edification: Freire's Critical Pedagogy and Jeungsan's Ethical Edification

The convergence between Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy and Jeungsan's approach to ethical edification (人倫敎化 *Kr.inryun gyohwa*) can be discerned in three major aspects. First, Freire's critique of the "banking model of education" aligns precisely with Jeungsan's criticism of contemporary schooling. Jeungsan declared:

> Sangje said, "The purpose of teaching people by founding schools all over the world is to resolve grievances of both divine beings and human beings. This is done by perfecting the Three Realms and greatly enlightening the world. However, the present schooling makes learners bend solely upon the desire for fame or wealth. Therefore, I made the realization of the Dao something that is to be completed outside of the present frame." (*Progress of the Order* 1:17)

Here, Jeungsan diagnoses the fundamental flaw of his time: education had been reduced to the pursuit of status and material benefit. He emphasized that true education should be rooted in *human nature* (人性 *Kr.in-seong*) as its foundation, upon which

vocational or practical training could be built. The purpose of schooling, he argued, was to advance civilization through a balance of spiritual and material education. But in reality, vocational and utilitarian concerns dominated, resulting in systemic corruption. For Jeungsan, education was not simply the imparting of knowledge (敎 *Kr.gyo*) but also the cultivation of transformation (化 *Kr.hwa*)—an education that inspires moral and emotional influence rather than mere technical competence.

Second, Jeungsan adopted what Freire calls a *problem-posing* method of education, encouraging disciples to arrive at critical consciousness (*conscientização*) through reflection rather than by passively receiving completed answers. For example, he once asked:

> "What are the three essential abilities a person must cultivate in this new age?"
> He then quoted the *Donghak kasa* (Donghak hymns):
> Sangje said, "There is a saying that for words, there was Su Qin and Zhang Yi, for knowledge, there was Shao Kangjie, and for writing, there was Li Tai-Bai and Du Zimei. In The Songs of the Eastern Learning, these three energies are embedded. Contemplate this deeply."(*Dharma* 2:42)

This teaching highlights not only the traditional Confucian "Six Arts" (*li, yue, she, yu, shu, shu*) but also a new triad of rhetorical, intellectual, and literary abilities suited to the modern world. Jeungsan's emphasis on *munjang* (literary composition), especially in the refined form of classical poetry, shows that he viewed literature as the essential artistic capacity for the coming age. In this way, he employed poetry not merely as ornament but as a medium of edification, preparing his disciples for a broader cultural and spiritual transformation.

Third, Jeungsan's use of poetry resonates strongly with Freire's concept of *codification*. Codification is the process of distilling an abstract idea into a concrete image or symbol that evokes critical reflection. A verse Jeungsan composed at the age of seven illustrates this dynamic:

> Taking a great stride, I hope that I do not demolish the Earth. Shouting with a big roar, I worry I may frighten Heaven [遠步恐地坼　大呼恐天驚].(*Acts* 1: 12)

This childhood poem condensed the abstract concept of the "power of the true self" into vivid imagery. For his disciples, it became a catalyst for critical reflection: *"Why did our teacher portray himself as such a vast being? Could we not also possess this hidden potential? Are our diminished lives the result of social or civilizational conditions? What must we do to realize our true power?"*

Through such poetic codifications, Jeungsan guided his followers into a process of critical awakening that was not simply intellectual but existential. His pedagogy demanded a reorientation of identity—from passive recipients of external authority to active subjects discovering their latent capacities.

Thus, Jeungsan's ethical edification harmonizes with Freire's critical pedagogy: both reject rote transmission, both privilege dialogical reflection, and both insist that education must lead to a transformation of consciousness and life.

The Completion of an Integrated Theory of Edification: Dialectical Unity of Theory and Practice

The multidisciplinary theories analyzed above converge organically within Jeungsan's theory of edification. Groome's Shared Praxis, Freire's conscientization, Jeong Un-chae's narrative therapy, reception aesthetics, language arts pedagogy, and symbolism functioned in a sequentially integrated manner. This integration can be observed through three illustrative cases.

First, a comprehensive reinterpretation of Kim Hyeong-Ryeol's edification case reveals a process of fundamental human transformation. At the outset, Jeungsan diagnosed the internalized oppressive consciousness expressed in the belief, *"Because I am poor, I am a worthless being,"* and identified the fatalistic, passive narrative structure that reinforced the notion, *"The poor must forever remain miserable."* Through symbolic intervention in the form of a classical poem—"Even tattered hempen clothes outshine golden armor; a collapsing house with a rough fence stands like an iron fortress"—he overturned the value system from *"poverty = inferiority"* to *"simplicity = superiority."* By employing the elevated cultural form of Chinese poetry, he endowed his disciple with a new identity, guiding the formation of critical awareness: *"I need not be confined by socially imposed values."* Ultimately, this led to the construction of a new narrative: *"One who knows true value can live with dignity beyond external conditions."*

Second, the integration of collective narrative therapy and conscientizing education is evident in Jeungsan's use of prophetic poetry during the Donghak Peasant Movement. At the time, the people were trapped within a destructive narrative: *"Armed struggle is the only way to achieve social transformation."* Jeungsan accurately diagnosed this limitation and, through poetic expression and probing questions, fostered their awareness of reality. By applying Freire's problem-posing education, he encouraged the people to critically reflect on their actions and narratives. From the perspective of literary therapy, the new narrative structure he offered made explicit that *"violent resistance inevitably results in failure and greater suffering."* This reconfiguration of narrative healed destructive trajectories and instilled in his disciples a confidence in pursuing "a better way," thereby strengthening the collective's narrative immunity. At the same time, the application of symbolism and reception aesthetics reinforced their internal strength and sense of subjective identity through the layered symbols embedded in the prophetic verse. Moreover, the repetitive use of incantatory language—integrating language arts pedagogy—enhanced the community's spiritual cohesion and motivation for practice.

Third, the integration of personal narrative therapy and dialogical education emerges in Jeungsan's *Poem of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity.* He discerned that his disciples

were confined within a fixed identity narrative of *"I already know enough."* Applying Groome's Shared Praxis model and Freire's problem-posing method, he raised the existential question, *"Where shall one return?"* to provoke profound self-awareness. Here, Jeong Un-chae's narrative therapy framework enabled disciples to shift from problematic narratives to growth-oriented ones grounded in self-inquiry. Through Freire's dialogical pedagogy, Jeungsan reinterpreted Donghak lyrics, rejecting authoritative cultural interpretation and creatively reconstructing the people's cultural heritage to suit the new era, thereby fostering communal reflection and wisdom. Furthermore, the integrated use of incantations and Chinese poetry, combining language arts pedagogy with symbolism, elevated individual spiritual concentration and imagination, while the cosmological symbols of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity articulated a profound ontological vision of self-realization and the completion of cosmic order.

This integrated theory of edification thus offers a vital alternative model that transcends the fragmentation of modern education and orients toward holistic human transformation.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that Kang Jeungsan's use of literature as a means of edification exhibits remarkable convergences with a wide range of modern theories in education and literary studies. More importantly, these theories are not applied externally but are seen to operate organically within Jeungsan's concrete practices. His pedagogy should therefore not be regarded merely as a particular religious phenomenon of late nineteenth-century Korea, but rather as a pioneering example of a universal educational model that simultaneously seeks holistic human growth and social transformation.

As such, Kang Jeungsan's integrated theory of edification offers significant theoretical and practical implications for diverse fields, including contemporary pedagogy, religious studies, and literary therapy. It provides critical insight into overcoming the limitations of fragmented modern education and realizing true holistic education (全人敎育 *Kr* jeonin gyoyuk).

In conclusion, Jeungsan's literary edification must not be treated as a relic of the past. Instead, it should be re-evaluated as a living resource that points toward the future direction of education—one that unites intellectual, emotional, moral, and spiritual dimensions in the service of both personal renewal and collective transformation.

Conflict of Interest

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

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The Tenrikyo Teaching of "No Distinction Between Male and Female Pines" and Present Society: Proposing Gender Equality Based on Tenrikyo's Teachings

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Abstract

In 1966, religious scholar Kazuo Kasahara published *Religion at a Turning Point*. In this book, Kasahara discusses Shinshu (True Pure Land Buddhism), Tenrikyo, and Soka Gakkai, and states that it is necessary to look back historically at the role of religion when specific religions emerged in response to the demands of people in a new era.

Tenrikyo, founded in 1838, incorporated a faith that transcended the framework of the traditional Buddhist parishioner (*danka*) system, and provided ordinary people the freedom of faith. Its doctrines presented the meaning of the creation of human beings, stating that each human being is equally a "brother and sister" as a "Children of God" and that there is no hierarchy based on origin, status, gender, or other factors. In other words, the religion's doctrine aims to build a world realizing DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion).

Here, I would like to consider what Tenrikyo can propose for the realization of a gender-equal society, taking the Foundress's words, "No distinction between male and female pine trees," as a clue.

These words of the Foundress, Miki Nakayama (1798–1887) encouraged religious activity among women of that time, who customarily had low social status. In today's society, which is trying to move toward true gender equality, I will examine the contemporary potential of these words.

Keywords: Tenrikyo; Children of God; Gender equality; Foundress; *Kagami-yashiki*

Introduction

In 1966, religious scholar Kasahara Kazuo published *Tenkanki no shūkyō* (転換期の宗教 [Religion at a Turning Point]). In this book, Kasahara discusses Shinshū (True Pure Land Buddhism), Tenrikyo, and Soka Gakkai, and states that it is necessary to look back at the historic role that religion played when it emerged in response to the demands of the people of that era (Kasahara 1966). Tenrikyo, founded in 1838, incorporated a faith that transcended the framework of the traditional Buddhist parishioner (*danka*) system,[1] and provided ordinary people the freedom of faith. Its doctrines presented the meaning of the creation of human beings, stating that each human being is equally a "brother and sister" as "Children of God" and that there is no hierarchy based on origin, status, gender, or other factors. Here, I would like to consider what Tenrikyo teachings propose for the realization of a gender-equal society, taking the Foundress's words, "No distinction between male and female pine trees," as a guiding clue.

These words from the Foundress encouraged religious activities among women of that time, who traditionally had a low social status. Women, characterized by menstruation and childbirth, were considered "unclean" and "polluted." This prejudicial view of impurity had the adverse effect of excluding women from religious activities. For example, they were not allowed to participate in festivals. The Foundress Nakayama Miki left the following anecdote, conveyed by Yamamoto Rihachi.

> "That is it. Did you notice those pumpkins and eggplants? They are big, aren't they? The plants bear fruit because the flowers bloom. Not a single plant bears fruit without its flower. Now ponder deeply. The world says that woman is unclean, but there is nothing unclean about woman. Men and women are equally children of God and there is no discrimination. Woman has a duty, a duty to bear children. Her monthly period is the flower. Without the flower there is no fruit. Understand this well. Take the example of the pumpkin; if its big flower is gone, that is the end of it. In many things, there are flowers that bear no fruit. But to bear fruit without any flower is impossible. Ponder deeply. There is nothing unclean about it."(Tenrikyo Overseas Department 1976, 127–128)[2]

Furthermore, when she bestows the "*Obiya Yurushi*, (Grant for Safe Children)"[3] to Moroi Kunisaburō, she instructed him as follows:

> "This is for the Grant of Safe Children. A high pillow[4] or a binder[5] is not necessary. And, as this is the season of persimmons,[6] do not be afraid to eat them."[7]

This showed that there were many sayings (customs) that had to be observed during childbirth, and that the mothers could have an easy delivery without worrying about the folklore legends concerning childbirth. These words and actions which are a total

affirmation of the way women are, also taught that woman, who were considered as being born with impurities, were no different from men as "children of God." Considering that the image of women in the *Onna Daigaku,*[8] published in the Edo period, was considered the feminine ideal during this time, it can be said that this "image of women" has been fundamentally overturned. However, in reality, women were still not treated the same as men in society. In the *Rongo to Soroban* ('The Analects and the Abacus'), written in the Taishō period (1912–1926), Shibusawa Eiichi pointed out that before the Meiji period (1868–1912), spiritual education was provided (by the *Onna Daigaku*), but knowledge such as wisdom, scholarship, and theory was not recommended or taught. Further, he stated, "In the Meiji period, women's education also progressed, but only a small number of people received this new education, and it is no exaggeration to say that the true nature of women in society did not coincide with the *Onna Daigaku*(Moriya 2018, 196–197). In order to change ingrained customs and ways of thinking, women as the people involved needed to relentlessly put it into practice, and continue to make their presence visible, in society.

What Does Verse 7:21 in the Ofudesaki (*The Tip of the Writing Brush*)[9] Teach to Humans?

> Of these trees, I do not say whether male pine or female pine.
> Tsukihi has an intention for any tree. (Ofudesaki 7:21)

Before and after this verse the Foundress has taught the following:

> As it is Tsukihi who rules over all,
> Never say that this is large or that is small. (7:14)
> Even until now, from My desire for useful timber,
> I have searched most everywhere. (7:15)
> This time, in the low valleys
> I see promising trees in abundance. (7:16)
> When Tsukihi enters these trees and brings them to
> Completion step by step, they will become pillars of nations. (7:17)
> Then, looking closely day by day,
> Tsukihi will prepare for more timber. (7:18)
> Step by step, I shall nurture trees, starting with aged ones,
> And assemble them in preparation for the future. (7:19)
> Day after day, as the intent of Tsukihi is deep,
> Two or three trees will be found even at one place. (7:20)
> Of these trees, I do not say whether male pine or female pine.
> Tsukihi has an intention for any tree. (7:21)
> What I shall talk about in the time to come
> Will be nothing but the preparations for My timber. (7:22)

Of these timbers, it is not to be just a few.
I desire fifty or sixty in numbers of people. (7:23)

According to the *Ofudesaki-tyūshaku* (Tenrikyo Church Headquarters ed. 2001, 116–117), everything is under the protection of God the Parent, so there is no point in measuring it by human standards like big or small, strong or weak. God the Parent nurtures those who work as God's hands and feet, and trains those who are now at the bottom of the valley (those considered lowly socially) to become God's tools (yoboku, useful timber). Men and women alike can become God's youboku, and there is no gender discrimination. In other words, those who become tools of God and work in the real world can be used by God as *yoboku* or *yogi* [用木], regardless of age or gender, as long as they are in line with God's will. In the current teachings, a person who has received the principle of *sazuke* is called a *yoboku*, and a *yoboku* contributes to the salvation of mind and body by passing on the principle of *sazuke* (a grant bestowed by Oyasama) to the sick, and thus also conveys the will of God the Parent. In addition, the *Ofudesaki* teaches as follows:

Step by step, the Parent, who began the world,
Will enter all of these useful timbers. (15:60)
When the Parent, who began this world, enters them,
There is no knowing what I shall do. (15:61)

These verses and the *Osashizu*[10] states, "Everyone must agree and be convinced. It is not enough for each individual to understand and be convinced. This is not in everyone's heart. If the heart does not feel it, there is nothing. If, regardless of gender, one purifies one's mind at one time and walks the path of faith, there is no distinction between men and women. It is the same no matter how many people there are. I speak of it as being like tools. Some do rough things, some do fine things, and some do things in between. Unless you understand this principle, you cannot go on. [. . .] Is it a man or a woman who begins on this path? If you attain enlightenment from this, you will understand anything. (March 25, Meiji 31)" and "If, regardless of gender, one purifies one's mind at one time and walks the path of faith, there is no distinction between men and women. (March 26, Meiji 31)."

Activities of the First Female Believers

Teachers (教人, *kyōto*) and Female Church Head Ministers (教会長, *kyōkai-chō*) in Tenrikyo

Yoboku is one of the terms used to refer to Tenrikyo believers. It can also be understood as the equivalent of a believer in other religious organizations. The term

likens the construction of God the Parent's ideal world of "*Yōki Gurashi* (Joyous Life)" to the construction of a building, and those engaged in missionary work to the lumber called *Yoboku*. In Tenrikyo, it refers to human resources in the field of missionary work. As mentioned above, the Foundress herself emphasized the necessity of *Yoboku*. The term *Yoboku* began to be used as a term within the Tenrikyo Church Headquarters after the publication of the *Tenrikyō Kyōten* (*The Doctrine of Tenrikyo*) in 1949. In 1959 (Shōwa 34), the religious rules were revised to refer to believers at the following stages: "*shin'ia* (信者)," "*yoboku*," and "*kyōto* (教人)." Once a "*yoboku*" has completed further training in faith through attending seminars and other courses, they reach the stage of "*kyōto*." This "*kyōto*" is a necessary qualification to become a church head minister and is considered to be the equivalent of a "teacher" in Tenrikyo. According to the Tenrikyo Statistical Yearbook, the number of *kyōto* was 58,728 at the end of fiscal year 1931, of which 21,994 (37.8%) were women. In 1947, the number of *kyōto* who became women exceeded that of men, and since 1956, the total number of female *kyōto* has exceeded that of male *kyōto*, and thereafter women have accounted for approximately 60% of the *kyōto*.

Table 1. Amount of Teachers (Kyōshi)

Year	Number of people	Number of Men	Number of Women	Percentage of women
1931	58,728	36,728	21,994	37.5
1932	60,126	36,998	23,128	38.5
1933	62,518			
1934	64,842			
1935	78,508	45,862	32,646	41.6
1936	82,620	47,245	35,375	42.8
1937	84,705	47,763	36,942	43.6
1938	85,053	47,720	37,333	43.9
1939	77,567	42,768	34,799	44.9
1946	401	222	179	44.6
1941	79,926	42,814	37,112	46.4
1942	81,562	43,511	38,051	46.7
1946	79,448	41,791	37,657	47.4
1956	96,261	45,396	50,865	52.8

Year	Number of people	Number of Men	Number of Women	Percentage of women
1966	108,606	45,782	62,824	57.8
1976	149,622	59,734	89,888	60.1
1986	183,039	71,596	111,443	60.9
1996	192,781	75,392	117,389	60.9
2006	174,206	68,232	105,974	60.8
2016	158,887	62,955	95,932	60.4
2024	145,636	58,096	87,540	60.1

Table 2. Annual Amount of Teachers (Kyō shi)

Year	Number of people	Number of Men	Number of Women	Percentage of women
1946	401	222	179	44.6
1947	2,122	985	1,137	53.6
1948	3,582	1,670	1,912	53.4
1949	2,863	1,330	1,533	53.5
1950	1,835	908	927	50.1
1951	3,141	1,391	1,750	55.7
1952	4,095	1,704	2,391	58.4
1953	4,592	1,869	2,723	59.3
1954	4,889	2,004	2,885	59
1955	5,213	2,126	3,087	59.2
1956	3,887	1,690	2,197	56.5

Table 3. Number of active churches (As of December 31, 2024)

	Domestic	Abroad	Total
Number of Churches	13,728	301	14,029
Number of Female Church Ministers	1,862	55	1,917
	15.10%	*22.40%*	*15.30%*

As of December 2024, Tenrikyo has 14,029 active churches[11] of which 15.3%[12] are headed by women. In the Tenrikyo Women's Association magazine, *Michi no Dai*, the serial stories "Women Described in the "Traces of Predecessors" (issues no.1–no.100, [1954–1988]) describe the journeys of faith of 116 women who converted to Tenrikyo. Of these women, 21 (18%) became church head ministers and 77 (66%) became wives of church head ministers and were involved in the establishment and management of churches.[13] All of the first female believers described here heard about Tenrikyo, organized their affairs, and started afresh. Among these women, including the Second generation and later generations, 54 became missionaries, 33 supported missionary work by raising funds for missionary work or making a living (in cases where they were married couples), and 44 worked as housewives to support their husbands((Horiuchi 1994, 74) They lived a life of missionary work with great joy. For example, it is noted that they have recounted:

* If you make people happy, God will be happy too. That's what Oyasan[14] said (Tenrikyo Women's Association 1960 October, no.20, 37).
* "It would be a shame to waste time on sewing and laundry when there is no time left for saving others," my mother said, and she researched ways to sew kimonos quickly and devised various methods to tackle household chores. (Tenrikyo Women's Association 1964 October, no.29, 61)
* My mother always walked by holding my hand. I wondered how she could look so happy in the midst of such hardship. ...All she said was "Oh, God the Parent, thank you, so much," and there was never a trace of complaint or lack of praise. Every time I heard my mother speak, I couldn't help but marvel(Tenrikyo Women's Association 1981 October, no.80, 79).
* Even as a child, I thought she was a wonderful woman, admonishing men in her own Kumamoto dialect in this exclusive, male-dominated land. (Tenrikyo Women's Association 1982 January, no.82, 77)
* There were days when the birds didn't sing, but not a day went by when she wasn't there to help others(Tenrikyo Women's Association 1983 May, no.85, 68)
* "Even someone like me, a country female who knows nothing, can perform *tsutome* (service) and pray to God the Parent, and then anyone with any illness can be saved. It's interesting and I'm grateful..." (Tenrikyo Women's Association 1985 October, no.92, 41).

There are many stories like this. A female believer said, "If I rely on God the Parent, I can't go wrong," and even in her old age, she gave loud speeches day and night at places where many people gathered, such as Toji Temple, Kyōto Station, and Kitano Tenmangū Shrine (Tenrikyo Women's Association 1985 October, no.92, 44). Another 80-year-old woman went on a missionary trip to Sendai, saying, "God has a mission for me, so I must carry it out. As long as I am carrying out this mission, I cannot stop helping others." (Tenrikyo Women's Association 1986 January, no.93, 126).

The women's ability to spread the teaching was remarkable, and it was backed by their confidence and joy in their faith.

On the other hand, when one looks at the "descriptions about wifely support," one can see that the number of descriptions of wives supporting husbands increases as time goes on, and at the same time, expressions such as "do as your husband says" and "the power of the shadows," which place emphasis on the ideal image of a woman that was spoken about in society in general, rather than on the image of a believer specific to Tenrikyo, come to be used. It can be said that the writers were influenced by such social conditions. *Shinkō ni ikiru joseitachi: Michi no sendatsu to shite tsuma to shite* (信仰に生きる女性たち：道の先達として妻として [The Women Who Lived by Faith: As Pioneers and Wives]) compiled and published by Tenrikyo Doyusha in 1990, this book depicts the female figure of a "wife," and in its preface it is written,

> There are as many churches that have been established in the 100 years since the founding of the Tenrikyo Church Headquarters as there are lanterns offered every year at the Spring and Autumn Services and on the Foundress's Birthday. Hidden in each of those lanterns is the infinite sincerity of our predecessors, and there is as many dramas of struggle, blood and sweat. The majority of the protagonists in these dramas have been men. However, these dramas would not have been possible without supporting characters. Rather, it must be said that it was because of the supporting characters that the drama of the principles of each and every name was born.

The main text describes the conversion stories of 22 female believers and their subsequent religious lives. While these are accounts of the lives of individual believers, the subtitles of their stories seem to emphasize the role of women as supporting characters. For example, there are titles such as 'The Unsung Efforts of a Woman Who Was Said to Be "One Step Ahead" of Her Husband' (Umetani Tane), 'The Loving Words of a Wife Who Encouraged Her Husband on the Path of Awa' (Tosa Masa), 'The Person Who Became a Dai' (Yamanaka Sono), 'The Devoted and Tender Care for Parents' (Uehara Sato), and 'The Gentle Endurance and Fierce Protection' (Ike Hana). Regarding Umetani Tane, who was regarded as a model of faith to be passed down to future generations, the following description is provided:

> The faith of Tane who has devoted herself entirely to working behind the scenes is too modest. In place of Shirobei, Tane's husband, who was often away, she supported 'Senba's (later, Senba Grand Church) household by her own self. It was this, her work behind the foundation of Shirobei's fierce faith for blossoming in the open. Furthermore, it is precisely because of the nurturing work that connects people with kindness that Shirobei's strict training has come to shine. [. . .] Not only did she support her husband behind the scenes, but she also believed the

> Truth of Jiba and steadfastly walked the path of gratitude. (Tenrikyo Doyusha 1990, 46–47)

At the same time, the women described in this book lived their lives according to their own beliefs and decisions. Some of them lived in different areas from their husbands, spreading the teachings and laying the foundations for what would later become grand churches. It is clear that they lived their lives not according to what they 'had to do' but according to what they 'could do' based on their beliefs. Their hardships were transformed into joy.

The teachings of the Foundress which appeared during the end of the Edo period (1603–1868) and spread through the Meiji period (1868–1912), changed the way people lived and caused great ripples in the surrounding society. For women, it was the realization of "women's liberation," or in modern terms, "gender equality." It can be said that the joy of faith, which fully affirmed the way women were, enabled women to take action.

Even today, as can be seen from statistics, women can become church leaders in Tenrikyo with few obstacles. However, the way in which they are perceived seems to be the image of women described in the *Women Who Live by Faith*. This suggests an ideal marital relationship, and at the same time, a relationship in which the wife and husband reciprocally support each other. To put it simply, isn't it because men expect women to be "wives" (as supporters of their husbands) and to play the role of "mothers (parents)?"

Construction of the Image of Women in Tenrikyo?

At the 25th International Congress of Oriental Studies held in Moscow in 1960, the Second Shinbashira,[15] Nakayama Shōzen gave a speech entitled "Woman's Position Viewed by Tenrikyo," which began with the following statement:

> Nowadays, when woman's status in society has been remarkably raised, equality of sexes is regarded as an everyday affair in all civilized countries. But the fact is that women are still held in low esteem by some religions, especially by established religions, in which both sexes are deemed equal only intellectually.

And he continued that "Tenrikyo was unique in regarding women's status originally as important and its doctrine demonstrated this fact as follows:"(Tenrikyo Church Headquarters 1961, 420–421)

> 1. The first step Tenrikyo took for salvation was to protect woman in childbirth.
> 2. The Foundress of Tenrikyo did not teach that women were more unclean than men. Women had been associated with pollution in the older religions on account of the menstruation peculiar to their sex.

3. Woman is in no sense lower in social standing than man, but both are originally equal. If they live with well-governed minds, there is no essential difference in personal values between both sexes.
4. Woman is not an evil spirit, but an important foundation of the religious faith of her family members. In short, "woman is the foundation of the faith."
5. The main difference was the primary duty of woman is to give birth to a child and bring it up.
6. Woman is passive by nature in contrast to the activeness of the other sex.…Yet the female sex has an expansible nature and an inquisitive mind, whereas the male is characterized by motivity, activity and dynamics.
7. The essential nature of a woman should be mildness and kind-heartedness.
8. Woman is attributed a natural inclination toward joining and perseverance. (Tenrikyo Church Headquarters 1961, 423–427)

Nakayama stated that these views of woman in Tenrikyo are also seen in actual practice. The first place is that the *Tsutome* or Service, the most important of the Tenrikyo rites, is performed by the ten people (five men and five women). And as mentioned before, many females act as heads of branch churches and female *kyōto* are more numerous than male ones, and so on.

He concludes "What I really mean is, that both sexes should help each other—each with its own sense of responsibility and its own peculiarity." (Tenrikyo Church Headquarters 1961, 430) These eight characteristics, especially the first three, are shown in song 7:21 of the Ofudesaki, and directly refer to the teachings on women in the *Anecdotes of Oyasama, the Foundress of Tenrikyo* section. The following characteristics seem to incorporate theories on the essence and roles of sex. The Second Shinbashira further spoke as follows in a speech at the 36th Tenrikyo Women's Association General Meeting:

> God created humans, dividing them into male and female, and protects them so that new life is born through each and every action of both. From the perspective of the two, there is no difference between high and low, and both female and male pines are equal. However, although men can conceive children, only women are allowed to give birth. As a result, although both men and women are equally parents to their children, when children look at their parents, it seems natural that they feel a stronger sense of parenthood towards their mothers than their fathers. (...) The special skill of a mother is the role of giving birth. It is also the joy of raising children. When this special skill is joyfully carried out in accordance with the teachings of nature, does not a harmonious bond between parent and child naturally arise? (Nakayama 1954, 2–3).

In this way, the precepts by the Second Shinbashira for women, which were based on the idea of "mother," created an image of women who were privileged with the "role of mother," and gradually came to preach the importance of men and women cooperating

while fulfilling their respective positions and roles. However, it is difficult to find lectures to men based on the concept of 'fatherhood,' while the privilege of the "role of mother" is taken for granted and linked to 'motherhood.' For example, there is little discussion of women who cannot become mothers or who choose not to become mothers. Since 'motherhood'[16] is often perceived as an innate quality of women, acts such as 'giving birth' and 'raising children' are easily recognized as part of a woman's role. As a result, childcare can become a 'privilege' for women. Women in the midst of childcare anxiety may feel self-doubt.

The aforementioned lecture by the Second Shinbashira at the annual meeting of the Tenrikyo Women's Association considered why women came to be called 'the foundation of the path (*michi* [=Tenrikyo])' and shared the process and results of that consideration with the members of the Tenrikyo Women's Association. In the latter half, the Second Shinbashira stated that this was related to the fact that the founder was a woman.

The Second Shinbashira's Precepts of the Third and Fourth Shinbashira also continued this trend and based on the "Moto no Ri (Truth of Origin),"[17] they emphasized the importance of women's position and role. In other words, the role of "giving birth and raising children" is the role that women should play. In terms of faith, this leads to the upbringing of the next generation of *yoboku*.

In the Osashizu concerning child raising, it is advised, "If you approach with a big heart, a child will become great; if you approach with a small heart, a child will become small. How can children grow up if their parents are angry? Everyone must take the place of Oya, God the Parent. It is the role of parents to satisfy their children and guide them along the way." (7 July, 1888) This is not for mothers but for parents. Raising children[18] is the role of parents.

About *Kagami-yashiki* (The Mirror Residence): A Mirror Reflecting Society and a Mirror Reflected in Society

The "good wife, wise mother" education that began in the latter half of the Meiji era emphasized women's roles in the home, and this value is thought to have created a division of roles based on gender, which seems to have led to the valuing of men and women differently in society. A notable example of this is "universal suffrage." Women did not have the right to vote or to be elected. The division of roles based on gender in society continued unchanged after World War II, and since it was a system that was convenient for industrial development, it is said to have become popular during the period of high economic growth in the 1960s. For a long time, the system in which the husband worked at a company and the wife played the role of housewife at home continued. In Japan, people's lives are viewed in terms of households and couples, and the differences in the social positions of individuals - husbands and wives - that had been buried in these units and became invisible, can be said to have been incorporated as the

basis of the broader social structure.

As seen in the previous section, the description of "Traces of Predecessors" in the *Michi no Dai* tends to emphasize the importance of 'the contributions of women behind the scenes' as time goes on. The fact that the Second Shinbashira highlighted 'motherhood' as a female privilege may be interpreted as demonstrating a gender-based approach to faith, which ended up discussing faith in terms of gender roles. It cannot be said that this trend was not influenced by the social trends of the time.

In his aforementioned presentation, the Second Shinbashira stated that one-third of Tenrikyo's church head ministers are women, reflecting the teaching of "no distinction between male and female pine." However, the current number of female church head ministers has now fallen to 15.3%. How to interpret this fact is a matter of faith, but it may also reflect the current state of the organization. In Japan, since the enactment of the Basic Act for Gender Equality, Japanese society has promoted women's participation in society and is promoting policies such as gender equality and awareness of unconscious gender bias. In this situation, how can female (and male) believers realize the religious conviction of 'no distinction between male and female,' which delighted them and would have surprised society? The following advice is given in the Osashizu. The Mirror Residence (*kagami-yashiki*) reflects society, but the reverse is also possible.

> "There is no distinction between men and women. Everyone understands this principle. Every day, we have our own tasks to perform. Depending on the circumstances, some tasks are necessary, and others are not. However, when the time comes, we are all of one mind. From the perspective of the world, this is truly the case. A pure heart is truly the way, and it can be explained later in the Mirror Residence. If it cannot be explained, it cannot be called the Mirror Residence. Understand this. There is no need to worry about your illness. If you are truly convinced in your heart, your illness will be cured. Everyone is the same, regardless of gender. There is no distinction between men and women. When reason is established, reality is settled. This is called an obstacle. Regardless of the type of obstacle, understand that reason is sufficient. No matter how difficult it may seem, it will be settled. Obstacles are not easily overcome. All reason is the same. There is no distinction between men and women. Understand this well." (19th May 1900)

And the Osashizu teaches, "This residence [19] is called the Four-fronted Mirror Residence[20] " (January 11, 1897) and "The world is a mirror, here is the Mirror Residence. If the World's foundation becomes cloudy, the world will also become cloudy. Think of it as shining again" (December 7, 1896). If the teaching of "there is no distinction between female and male pines" can be reflected in the world as it is, then it is possible for the world to change in the same way. In situations where people are considered to be female or male, it will be necessary to visualize and show the "state in which there is no distinction between female and male pines" in the "Mirror Residence" even in

situations other than religious rituals.

Conclusion

In *Shi-shūkyō no suitai to jendāmondai: Ōmoto no jireikara* 新宗教の衰退とジェンダー問題：大本の事例から[The Decline of Japanese New Religions and the Problems of Gender: From an Example of Omoto], Kumata Kazuo (2025) states that "Since the 1970s, the decline of new religions up to the third stage (those that had completed their expansion by the 1960s) has been noticeable. It's been explained by linking it to the increasing individualization of society. However, the article suggests that gender issues may also be significantly involved, and discusses the example of Oomoto, whose influence on a religious organization has not declined." He argues that one of the reasons Oomoto has not declined is that its Foundress, Deguchi Nao, instituted matrilineal succession, the "unintended consequence" of which was that wives were guaranteed equal voice with their husbands. He also states that the gender issue of "deep-rooted male chauvinism" is also related to this background and has led to the decline of the new religion. It also points out that many religious orders may have failed to break away from the family ethic of the "modern family" (a nuclear family with a husband who is a full-time employee of a company, a wife who is a housewife and two or three children), which was compatible with society until the 1960s.

Fujiwara Masato, who serves as the director of the Tenrikyo missionary post in Lyon, France, said, "While engaged in missionary work for Tenrikyo in France, I have often heard women say, "It is wonderful that the founder is a woman." Recently, at the missionary post's lecture of monthly service in Lyon, I gave a brief introduction to the life of the Foundress, Nakayama Miki, and what Tenrikyo refers to as "*hinagata*" (divine model). Apparently, the story caught their attention, an elderly woman remarked, "Why haven't you shared such stories before? I would like to hear more about this." I had only briefly touched on the subject, but the unexpected reaction left me surprised. It seems that the significance of having a female founder in France is greater than I had imagined, and after more than 20 years in France, I am beginning to understand this"(Fujihawa 2025, 4).

Fujiwara stated, 'There are many French women who are interested in the fact that the founder of a religion that advocates gender equality was a woman, and moreover, a woman born in feudal Japan at the end of the 18th century.' He further stated that the doctrine of gender equality taught by the female founder had been established as a doctrine and ideology since the time of Miki Nakayama's lifetime. The highest ritual of faith practice, the '*tsutome*,' is a ceremony directly taught by the Foundress, where men and women perform together in the same place. Additionally, he points out that the '十全の守護*Ju-zen no Shugo* [ten aspects of complete providence] '[21], which forms the core of the teachings, contains equal parts male and female elements. He then states the following.

> "On the other hand, it could be said that gender equality in Tenrikyo is not as clearly achieved as the teachings suggest. It is not uncommon to feel a male-centred bias in various situations, and this tendency is likely reinforced by the conservatism inherent in religion. The degree of gender equality within Tenrikyo is lower than that found in modern Japanese companies, families, and society in general. There are female church ministers. However, it is questionable whether male and female church ministers are treated as completely equal. While I do not have sufficient statistical data, it should not be difficult to demonstrate that even if the head of a local religious organization (church) is a woman, there are few women among the members of the larger organizational body that holds decision-making authority." (Fujihawa 2025, 4)

In Tenrikyo, it is clear that "the teachings about sexes are equal" and with regard to men and women, "there is no institutional distinction between them." How do people react when this assertion is put forward more strongly than in general society? Do they "see" the teachings being put into practice?

It will be possible to reflect the joy of the first female member of the Tenrikyo faith, who started from scratch and relied solely on her personal faith to preach, in the present day, not only through the activities of individual believers, but also through the Mirror Residence reflecting the joy of faith from a gender equality perspective to the world.

Conflict of Interest

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

Notes

[1] The *danka* system (檀家制度 *Jp. danka seido*), also known as *jidan* system (寺檀制度 *Jp. jidan seido*), is a system of voluntary and long-term affiliation between Buddhist temples and households. During the Tokugawa shogunate, the system was turned into a citizen registration network and became a government-mandated and Buddhist temple-run system to monitor and control the population as a whole.

[2] "No.158. Monthly Period Is the Flower."

[3] Grant of Safe Childbirth. *Obiya-yurushi* is one of the grants bestowed at the Jiba (the Tenrikyo axis mundi) by the eternally living Oyasama, which ensures an easy and safe childbirth. *Obiya-yurushi* was granted in the early days with three breaths and three strokes but was later changed to the grant of sacred powder made of roasted grains. Roasted grains were replaced by sugar candy around 1878, and later by washed rice from 1904 on.

[4] *Takamakura*, a wooden pillow to which a small pillow is attached. Also called box pillow or boat-bottom pillow. Used to keep Japanese hair in place and to prevent blood from rising to the head during childbirth. It is also known as a *kō chin*.

[5] On the first dog days of the fifth month of pregnancy, a pregnancy band is wrapped around the abdomen to celebrate a safe birth. In the past, the risks were significantly higher than they are now, and the pregnancy band was worn on the skin to protect the mother and the baby and to express the desire for

a safe childbirth. The dog day is also considered a lucky day because of the lightness of the dog's birth.

[6] An old folkloric belief was, "if a pregnant woman eats a persimmon, she will miscarry."

[7] It was in the autumn of 1884. Moroi Kunisaburō requested the Grant for Safe Childbirth for the sake of his fourth child. The Foundress herself cut the paper into squares, then brought out about one hundred and fifty grams of small sugar candies. She put three candies on each of the three sheets of paper and wrapped them and said these words ("No.151. Grant for Safe Childbirth," Tenrikyo Overseas Department 1976, 123.)

[8] The *Onna Daigaku* (Women's College) is a book of lessons for women that had been widely disseminated since the mid-Edo period. The book emphasizes feudalistic and submissive morality, such as "A chaste woman has only one husband," and the importance of submitting to the husband as the heavenly (absolute) ruler. In the Meiji era (1868–1912), several works were written that criticized the *Onna-daigaku* and explained alternatives to the ideal state of women in modern social life.

[9] Ofudesaki, *The Tip of the Writing Brush*, is one of the Three Scriptures of Tenrikyo. It consists of 1,711 verses contained in seventeen manuscripts that are traditionally called 'the seventeen volumes of the Ofudesaki' and preserved in Tenrikyo Church Headquarters" (Nakayama 1995, 34). The Ofudesaki was written in Oyasama's own handwriting between 1869 and 1882. Until it was first printed in 1928, it was only available in the form of hand-copied manuscripts. (Tenrikyo Overseas Department 2010, 249.)

[10] These are from the Divine Directions, one of Tenrikyo's Three Scriptures, the one that was complied from the transcriptions of those verbal revelations through the *Honseki*, Iburi Izo. Divine Directions can be classified into two groups according to the nature of what prompted the delivery. One is comprised of those that God took the initiative to deliver as befitted the time and situation in order to bring about salvation. The other group consists of those that were delivered in response to inquiries made by individuals or groups about illness, natural disasters, other issues of various sorts encountered in the course of life, and ways of handling church affairs. The former is known as "Timely Talks, *kokugen*" and the latter as "Directions in Response to Inquiries, *ukagai*." (Tenrikyo Overseas Department 2010, 71–72.)

[11] Churches where there is a church head minister (church bearer).

[12] Horiuchi counted the names of church ministers registered in the *Tenrikyo Statistical Yearbook*. Some names are used for both men and women, so this figure is approximate.

[13] In Tenrikyo, female believers are called 'the foundation of the path.' Literally, this means that women are the foundation of Tenrikyo's faith (Horiuchi 1994, 70–73)

[14] The Foundress, Nakayama Miki, was called "Oyasan" or "Oyasama" by her followers.

[15] The term "Shinbashira" refer to "the one who governs Tenrikyo" in the Ofudesaki (I:58 56) and would be a post created out of necessity after Tenrikyo established itself as a religious organization. Article 9 of the Constitution of Tenrikyo states that "The Shinbashira shall bear the family name of Nakayama. The successor to the Shinbashira shall be designated, based on the lineage of Oyasama, at a meeting of *Honbu-in* [Church Headquarters executive staff members]." The Shinbashira is descended from the founder's bloodline and inherits the Nakayama surname, so it does not matter whether the person is male or female. However, all previous Shinbashira, (the First Shinbashira, Nakayama Shinnosuke who was the son of the Foundress's daughter Masa, was appointed by the Foundress) have been male, and the current Shinbashira successor is also male. Incidentally, all current *Honbu-in* staff are male.

[16] 母性(*bosei*). The term 'motherhood' is a translation of the Swedish word 'moderskap.' In Japan, the term "motherhood" was first used in Hiratsuka Raicho's translation of '母性の復興(*Bosei no fukkō* [The Restoration of Motherhood])' (1919) and became established during the Showa period (1926–1989). According to the *Kōjien* dictionary (3rd edition), 'motherhood' is a natural trait that women naturally possess when they become mothers, and 'maternal love' is something that is innate and instinctive. The term 'motherhood' came into use after the 'motherhood protection debate (*bosei hogo ronsō*)' in the late 1910s, meaning that it has only been around for about 100 years.

[17] The term "truth of origin" appears as the heading of chapter 3 of *The Doctrine of Tenrikyo*, followers

often use the term to refer to the Story of Creation, which constitutes much of that chapter. The "truth of origin" (the Story of Creation) is referred to the origin of human creation in order to save all humankind. This consists of the foundation of God's providence, the truth of the Parent of Origin, the significance of the Service, "the Causality of the Soul of Oyasama, the Causality of the Residence, and the Causality of the Promised Time" and other fundamental teachings.

[18] The following anecdote is recorded in '9 According to the Parents' Minds' of the *Anecdotes of Oyasama, the Foundress of Tenrikyo*. "Toward the middle of July 1863, when Yoshimatsu, the eldest son of Chūsaku Tsuji, was four years old, his face became pale, and he was in danger of dying. Oryū, Chūsuke's mother, came to pray, carrying her sick grandchild on her back. Oyasama saw them and said: "His parents should bring him instead." So Masu, Chūsaku's wife, carrying the boy on her back, came to pray. "I will save the child according to the parents' minds," was the teaching of Oyasama. The boy was completely restored to health in four or five days." Furthermore, in the *Anecdote of Oyasama, the Foundress of Tenrikyo* '57 A Boy Should Be Accompanied by His Father,' when the son, who was nine years old at the time, fell ill, his grandmother and mother took turns praying to Oyasama for his recovery, but he did not recover easily. When his mother went to pray, she heard from Tsuji Chūsaku that 'a boy should be accompanied by their father.' So, his father, who had been reluctant until then, took his son with him to pray, and his son recovered in a few days.

The first anecdote teaches us that children grow up according to the hearts of their parents. The second anecdote can be interpreted as emphasizing the importance of the father's role in the growth of a boy, as well as encouraging fathers to participate in childcare.

[19] Jiba, the place where God the Parent descended at the time of human creation. Followers call God, who created and nurtured humans, Oyagami-sama, meaning "God the Parent." The *Kanrodai* (the Stand for the Heavenly Dew) is located at that spot and is the focus of worship.

The Foundress left behind the following story about the way of life of the people who lived in the Residence. "All of you who are living in this Residence are brothers among brothers. When one of you goes out somewhere, the rest of you should choose the best clothing from among your clothes, put it together, even if it is only to own, and have the person go out wearing it. Furthermore, those who happen to have money should one or two *sen* (currency units formerly used in Japan) from each and give it as pocket money. And you should see him or her off in high spirits. This is what brothers and sisters should do." ('163 Brothers Among Brothers in the *Anecdotes of Oyasama, the Foundress of Tenrikyo*.)

[20] Using the analogy of a mirror, the Osashizu teaches that the Residence (*yashiki*) needs to have the perfection of charity and purity. Not only are the things happening in the world reflected in the Residence, but the minds of people in the Residence are also reflected to the world; thus, if their minds are purified and spirited, their purity and spiritedness will help purify the minds of others. Further it is referred among followers that "This Residence is the 'Four-Fronted (*shihō-shō men*) Mirror Residence'" (Osashizu, April 23, 1887).

[21] The teaching of "the ten aspects of the complete workings of God" indicates and explains a number of concrete workings of God that typify "ten aspects" in order to help people clearly recognize and understand God's complete providence, enable all things without exception to exist. A sacred name is applied to each aspect. They consist of five male names and five female names. At the *tsutome* (Service), the ten Service performers represent the ten aspects of God's providence when they perform the Kagura Service around the central pillar in Jiba. Each pair of aspects of the providence, represented by the two performers facing each other in the Kagura Service, is a mutually complementary pair. This pair consists of a male performer with a male divine name and a female performer with a female divine name, conveying the message of cooperation between men and women.

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Exploring Daesoon Jinrihoe's Social Responsibility and Humanitarian Service

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Abstract

We begin this article by noting that in fulfillment of the divine mandate bestowed upon Kang Jeungsan, his two prominent successors—Jo Jeongsan and Park Wudang—organized the movement's teachings and institutional framework. Their painstaking efforts laid the foundation for Daesoon Jinrihoe's engagement with modern education, charitable aid and healthcare institutions, aiming to disseminate the movement's social welfare activities into contemporary Korean society since its official founding in April 1969. These initiatives have earned the movement recognition both domestically and internationally, particularly among academics, scholars and humanitarian activists. The purpose of this article is to examine key aspects of Daesoon Jinrihoe's social engagement. Before examining the issues in depth, we first explore the fundamental principles of the religion and understand their significant role in influencing its followers and thereby fostering a strong sense of responsibility and service to humanity. In the present study, content analysis is applied as the method of data analysis to facilitate a qualitative examination of relevant literature. Through this approach, the study seeks to identify recurring themes related to the movement's social engagement. In conclusion, this study provides a concise yet in-depth understanding of how Daesoon Jinrihoe's social engagements, based on its basic principles—particularly Reciprocity and Mutual Beneficence—are manifested in contemporary social contexts through volunteer activities. It further illustrates how these principles influence the attitudes, values, and behaviors of the movement's followers in their commitment to social engagements as a form of humanitarian service.

Keywords: modern religion; Daesoon Jinrihoe; Daesoon community; commitment to social engagement; reciprocity and mutual beneficence; planetary stewardship; earthly paradise

Introduction

The term religion is relatively new to Korea, having been introduced only at the end of the 19th century. As an imported concept, it remains a somewhat imprecise fit for many indigenous Korean organizations and phenomena that outsiders often categorize as religious. Many such groups do not neatly conform to Western definitions of religion, creating ambiguity in classification (Buswell and Lee, 2007; Baker 2008). Korea's religious history is marked by evolving perceptions and understandings of religion, particularly during times of sociopolitical transformation. The late 19th century was a period of intense turmoil, marked by the decline of the Joseon dynasty, internal strife, increasing foreign intervention—especially from Japan—and a series of natural disasters including floods and droughts. These crises, along with excessive taxation, severely affected the lower classes and fostered a longing for spiritual renewal and social change. Although traditional religions such as Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism continued to play important roles during the Joseon period, many people began to yearn for a new spiritual order. In this context, new religious movements (NRMs) emerged, reflecting both a continuity with indigenous religious heritage and a response to new social realities. Among these, Daesoon Jinrihoe arose as a significant movement in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, claiming spiritual and cosmic renewal through its founder, Kang Jeungsan (Kim 2020). According to theological interpretations (Aslan 2017), Kang Jeungsan is regarded by his followers as the human incarnation of Gucheon Sangje (the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven), who was implored by divine sages, Buddhas, and Bodhisattvas to descend to Earth to restore cosmic order and balance between the spiritual and material realms. Reflecting the broader pattern of religious syncretism found in both ancient and modern religions, Daesoon Jinrihoe integrates elements from Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Korean shamanism (Ministry of Culture 1977). Daesoon Jinrihoe envisions the establishment of an earthly paradise grounded in the principle of "resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence," which shares conceptual resonance with the Christian idea of the "Kingdom of God" (DIRC 2017, 210). After the passing of Kang Jeungsan, his teachings were systematized and disseminated by Jo Jeongsan and Park Wudang, in a manner analogous to how major historical figures such as Paul the Apostle in Christianity, ʻUmar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb in Islam, Guru Gobind Singh in Sikhism, and Swami Vivekananda in Hinduism carried forward the missions of their respective founders. Similarly, Onisaburo Deguchi in Japan's Ōmoto and spiritual leaders like Lê Văn Trung and Phạm Công Tắc in Caodaism advanced comparable syncretic, millenarian visions.

To extent, with particular reference to the concept of modern religion—characterized by institutional specialization, including the standardization of religious worldviews, doctrines, rituals, religious roles, propagation of teachings, and organizational programs (McGuire 1997)—Daesoon Jinrihoe can also be regarded as a modern religious movement. The reason appears to lie in its ability to maintain a well-structured

organizational framework that extends into multiple social dimensions, both within and beyond the Daesoon community. Religious teachings, by broadening human consciousness, fostering a sense of universal brotherhood, and nurturing a deep commitment to humanitarian service, play a critical role in shaping socially responsible behavior (Chatterji 1970). When considering the characteristics of modern religions, Daesoon Jinrihoe's organizational structure stands out for its capacity to inspire adherents toward active social engagement. Again, we see the remarkable contributions of Jo Jeongsan and Park Wudang who formalized the movement's teachings and institutional structure, establishing education and healthcare organizations that extended Daesoon Jinrihoe's social impact. Since its official founding in April 1969, the movement has actively contributed to Korean society through its commitment to charitable aid, social welfare, and education, drawing recognition both domestically and internationally from intellectuals and advocates of peace (Kim 2020). The scheme of the current paper is organized around a number of centrally located and connected issues as mentioned above. However, before addressing the subject matter of the current study, we first focus on the principle of reciprocity and mutual beneficence, which fosters followers' engagement in humanitarian services.

Reciprocity and Mutual Beneficence

The followers of Daesoon Jinrihoe uphold the principle of Mutual Beneficence (Sangsaeng), which involves benefiting others and repaying benevolence. This ethical ideal is more than a social value—it is a spiritual imperative rooted in the broader theological framework of the movement. While biology uses the concept of mutualism or symbiosis to describe interspecies interactions where both organisms benefit—such as the relationship between honeybees and flowering plants during pollination—Daesoon Jinrihoe extends this concept into the realm of intentional moral action (Soryte 2022, 106). In natural mutualism, the exchange of benefits is largely automatic and driven by instinct; however, in Daesoon Thought, Mutual Beneficence must be motivated by conscious intention and a sincere desire to bring well-being to others (Soryte 2022, 108–109).

According to the teachings of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the world can be transformed into a paradise if humanity commits itself to the dual principles of "Resolving Grievances" (Haewon) and "Gratefully Reciprocating Favors" (Boeun)—foundational values that lead to the realization of Mutual Beneficence (Cha 2018, 68). Followers believe that gratitude for divine blessings must be expressed through acts of kindness and service to others. Consequently, contributing to the welfare of society becomes not only a moral duty but a spiritual practice. This belief strongly motivates members of Daesoon Jinrihoe to engage in charitable and social welfare activities, viewing such acts as essential expressions of their faith and gratitude (Soryte 2018, 81).

Creation of a New Cosmic Harmony

Daesoon Jinrihoe envisions the realization of an ideal world—one free from injustice, suffering, and conflict. Social engagement is understood as a vital means to achieving this transformation by healing societal divisions and promoting mutual cooperation. Central to this vision is Kang Jeungsan's (also rendered as Kang Jeung-san) "Reordering Work of Heaven and Earth" (Cheonji-Gongsa), which is believed to have rectified the cosmic disorder and opened the path toward an everlasting earthly paradise (Introvigne 2018, 35). Within this theological framework, followers of Daesoon Jinrihoe perceive their religious mission as one of disseminating divine teachings and actively contributing to the rectification of the world order through a wide range of social welfare initiatives (Dinh 2025, 27).

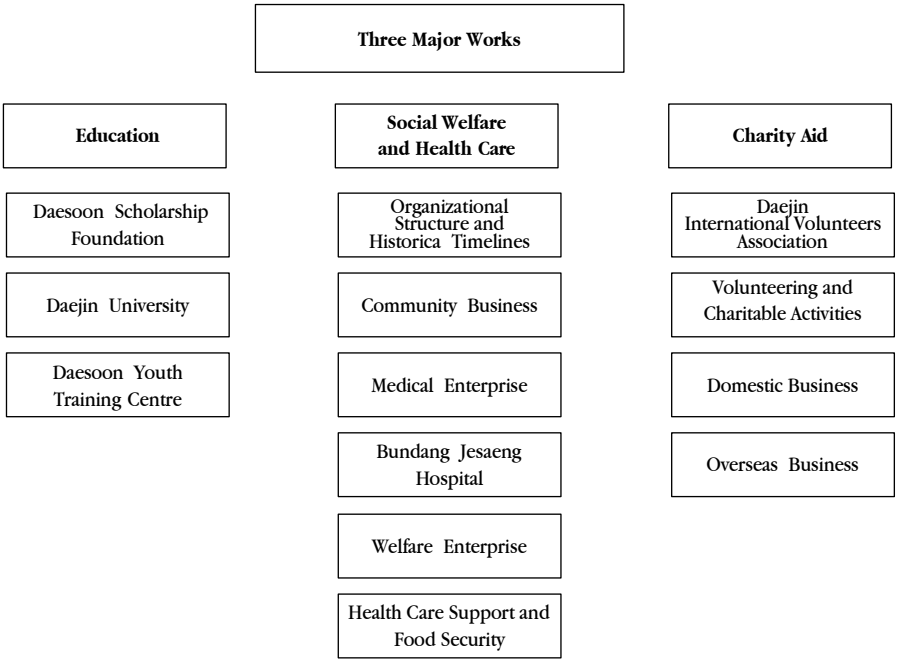


Figure 1. Daesoon Jinrihoe's Holistic Approach towards Creating a New Cosmic Harmony.

Social works in Daesoon Thought are regarded as tangible expressions of divine will, aiming to create a more just, peaceful, and compassionate society. Rooted in its core doctrinal principles, the movement emphasizes two fundamental concepts: Haewon-Sangsaeng (resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence) and Boeun-Sangsaeng (grateful reciprocation for mutual beneficence) (Kim 2025, 188). The principle of Haewon stresses the necessity of resolving accumulated grievances, injustices, and conflicts—both personal and collective—in order to restore cosmic and social harmony. Conversely, Boeun underscores the ethical imperative to repay kindness and blessings

received from deities, ancestors, society, and nature (Baker 2016, 9). These two interlinked principles aim to promote gratitude, ethical reciprocity, and harmonious coexistence, which are foundational to the movement's vision of cosmic renewal.

The practice of these principles is embodied in Daesoon Jinrihoe's social engagement, particularly since the 1970s. We now proceed to examine in detail Daesoon Jinrihoe's social engagement, focusing on its three primary areas of activity: education, social welfare, and charitable aid. Before dealing with the issue in detail, we present the distinctive features of Daesoon Jinrihoe's holistic approach through the following chart, which outlines its core functionaries aimed at contributing to Creation of a new cosmic harmony.

Education

To begin with Daesoon Jinrihoe established its first educational foundation in 1984. The followers maintain the instruction of Park Dojeon. As Dojeon noted:

> It is our goal to provide a well-rounded education characterised by the cultivation of morality and a law-abiding spirit and additionally enable students to develop sound minds and bodies. Thus, we should put much effort into raising talented people who will meet the demands of this age and make contributions to the public and to national interests (AADDJ 2017, 83).

The implication of the instruction in its usage is undoubtedly to distinguish the organizational base of Daesoon Jinrihoe's educational movement from that of the surrounding social institutions. It is important to note that Dojeon's instruction seems to have served as a source of inspiration from which Daesoon followers were primarily concerned with the way in which Daesoon organization is attached to works that started during the early days of the anti- illiteracy movement. As part of its ongoing success in recent years, Daesoon Jinrihoe has established an accredited university and six high schools, which include Daejin University, Daejin high school, Ilsan Daejin high school and Busan Daejin high school of Electronics and Telecommunications. Indeed, university seeks to nurture a new generation of creative and proactive individuals who embody both intelligence and wisdom, and who are committed to the advancement of humanity and the betterment of society. To this extent, proponents of Daesoon Jinrihoe assert that its educational vision has the potential to cultivate young leaders both locally and globally, guided by a spirit of mutual benefit and win-win growth (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2025a).

Daejin University

Daejin University is a private university which is located in Pocheon, Gyeonggi province, South Korea. It was founded by Daesoon Jinrihoe in November 1991 and

inaugurated in 1992. Initially Daejin university was named Daejin Academy and changed to Daejin University in 1992. It is one of the top private universities in South Korea. It is ranked 364 in Asian University Rankings- Eastern Asia 2004. Daejin Jinrihoe has two campuses in China, in Harbin and Suzhou, where some Korean students also study, supported by Daejin University Scholarships. It includes 4 graduate schools, 7 colleges, 22 departments, 10 undergraduates' schools, 23 majors, 1 international co-operation college, 24 affiliated institutes, 1 industry-academic cooperation foundation, 2 research institutes and 22 affiliated research centres (Daejin University 2025, as of 2003).

Structural Overview of Daejin University (Academic Units)

Daejin Jinrihoe has two campuses in China, in Harbin and Suzhou, where some Korean students also study, supported by Daejin University Scholarships. It includes 4 graduate schools, 7 colleges, 22 departments, 10 undergraduate schools, 23 majors, 1 international co-operation college, 24 affiliated institutes, 1 industry-academic cooperation foundation, 2 research institutes, and 22 affiliated research centres.

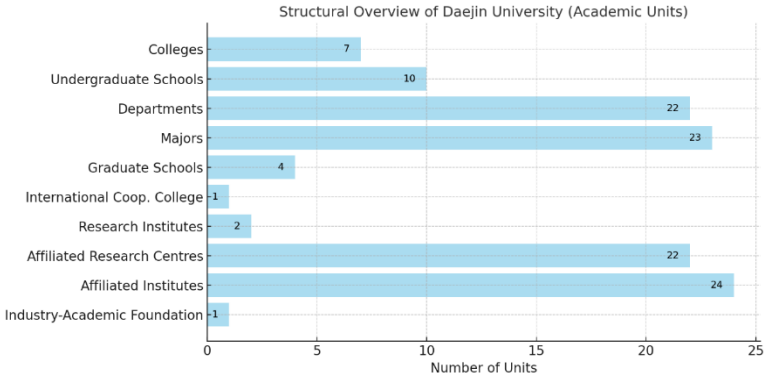


Figure 2. Structural Composition of Daejin University across Various Academic and Research Units.

Daejin University aims to nurture innovative and self-reliant individuals who can make meaningful contributions to the advancement of both the nation and humanity (Daejin University, 2020). In pursuit of this mission, the university is committed to the pursuit of truth through sincere, respectful, and faithful teaching and research across a wide range of academic disciplines. These educational endeavors are guided not only by the broader educational philosophy of the Republic of Korea but also by the unique spiritual tenets of Daesoon Thought, particularly the principle of the Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence (Haewon-Sangsaeng). Central to Daejin University's vision is the cultivation of leaders who embody the ideal of mutual beneficence—those who strive to improve the world through ethical scholarship and moral integrity. Students are encouraged to engage in their studies with sincerity (seongsil), respectfulness (gyeonggeon), and conviction (sinyeom), while practicing the values of great

benevolence and great justice—key virtues drawn from the religious ethos of its founding body. As stated by the university's founder, Park Woodang: "The objective of Daejin University is to foster creative, talented people with outstanding knowledge and character to contribute to the development of society with the spirit of faithfulness (seongsil), piety (gyeonggeon), and conviction" (Daejin University 2025b).

By integrating ethical and spiritual dimensions into its academic mission, Daejin University continues to serve as an institution where the ideals of Daesoon Thought are realized through education and global engagement (Soryte 2018, 92). Daejin Jinrihoe defines its strategies through slogans. One is "humanities education based on benevolence and righteousness," which is strictly connected with the principles of Daesoon Thought. The second, which is self-explanatory, and alludes to the fact that today many college graduates remain unemployed, is "Practical education with focusing on employment". The third is "Creating smart campus," which doesn't forget the importance of ecology in Daesoon Jinrihoe and calls for an eco-friendly environment. In fact, one of the most important international events was co-organized by Daejin University on October 3–5 2019 in Yeouju city. Lastly the fourth is "strengthening the brand of global Daejin" and alludes to the DUCC (Daejin University China Campus) project in mainland China. Daejin University is solidifying its image and expanding its global brand image by exchange programs with many countries.

Daesoon Scholarship Foundation

In 1976—fifteen years prior to the founding of Daejin University—the Daesoon Scholarship Foundation was established in accordance with the directive of the Dojeon (the religious title given to the successor of Doju Jo Jeongsan, the successor of Kang Jeungsan), who proclaimed: "Expand the amount of scholarship on a yearly basis in order to cultivate talented individuals for the benefit of the nation as well as for our religious body" (AADDJ 2017, 84). This foundation was created to support academically excellent students, particularly those from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. The Scholarship Foundation, in its current scope of activities, operates on a remarkably extensive scale.

To better understand the scope of its activities, we may examine the Foundation's current initiatives. The Scholarships are awarded biannually under various categories, including the Scholarship for Exemplary Students, Scholarship for Honor Students, Scholarship for Junior and High School Children of Daesoon Jinrihoe Members, and Scholarship for Students of Daejin University. These initiatives reflect the movement's commitment to both educational development and social contribution, inspired by the principle of Boeun-Sangsaeng—repaying benevolence and promoting mutual beneficence. By 2015, the total value of scholarships distributed through the foundation had reached approximately 43 million USD, demonstrating Daesoon Jinrihoe' extensive investment in education as a means of fostering societal well-being and cultivating future

leaders (AADDJ 2017, 85).

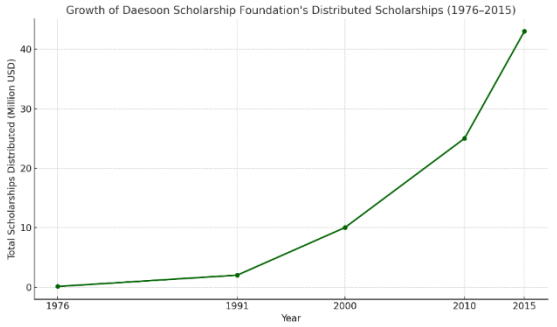


Figure 3. The Growth of Daesoon Scholarship Foundation's Distribution Scholarship from 1976 to 2015.

Daejin Youth Trainting Center

Daejin Youth Training Center was built to realise a well-rounded education. The facility is a four-story building with a basement and it can accommodate 200 people. For the purpose of raising truthful future generations, the centre has run various educational programs since its opening in March of 2013. The religious programs include 'Daesoon Youth Campus', 'Lectures for University Students', 'Religious Cultural Field Trips' and 'Truth Forums for Branch Members' (AADDJ 2017, 85).

There are two certified training courses for adolescents as well. One is a volunteering program called 'Empathy and Sharing' and the other one is called 'Daejin Futsal (Indoor Soccer) Class.' The "Empathy and Sharing" program cooperates with other Daesoon Jinrihoe institutions. For example, participants can learn how to take care of the elderly and help them with wheelchairs. Meanwhile, the Daejin Futsal class provides local elementary students with basic futsal skills while improving their physical health. The DYTC facility includes accommodation, lecture rooms, a hall, an indoor sports centre, a field and an outdoor concert hall. The Daesoon youth camp is held twice annually for elementary, middle and high school students in relation to the primary doctrine, mortality and ethics for the personality and character of children. Furthermore, the centre is preparing new programs for families of Daesoon Jinrihoe and the local adolescents (AADDJ 2017, 85).

Diversity, Culture and Art

The purpose of the diversity, culture and art is to provide a safe space and resources for people of all walks of life to pursue self-realisation, evolve understanding, and give back to their communities. Their mission is to focus on providing resources, safe spaces, education and allyship. They also focus on providing a safe space for creatives to collaborate, inspire, give back to humanities and to evolve emotionally, spiritually through their prospective mediums (Daesoon Foundation 2025a).

Social Welfare and Health Care

The commitment of Daesoon Jinrihoe to social welfare and healthcare is deeply rooted in the teachings of Park Wudang, who emphasized the moral responsibility of individuals toward their nation and society. One of his most influential exhortations declares:

> We are indebted to our nation and society for our security and comfort. So you should promote the development of society through earnestly fulfilling your duties as a citizen. (AADDJ 2017, 79)

Guided by these ethical imperatives, Daesoon Jinrihoe views Social Welfare Work as a form of spiritual cultivation. This approach is grounded in the organization's central religious principles: Mutual Beneficence, the Resolution of Grievances, and the Grateful Reciprocation of Favors, as revealed by Sangje. These values are not merely abstract ideals but are enacted through a wide range of initiatives designed to enhance societal well-being and promote harmonious coexistence.

Daesoon Jinrihoe conducts its annual social welfare and healthcare activities through various affiliated bodies, including the Women's Association, Youth Association, Daesoon International Volunteer Association (DIVA), Daesoon Jinrihoe Welfare Foundation, and Daejin Medical Foundation with its associated hospitals. These institutions together form a cohesive structure supporting the religious organization's commitment to public service and humanitarian outreach. In short, all major institutional establishments of Daesoon Jinrihoe from 1972 to 2018 are illustrated in the following timeline graph.

Table. 1. Timeline of Institutional Establishments in Daesoon Jinrihoe (1972–2018)
(Source: Daesoon Jinrihoe 2025b)

Year	Institutional Establishment
1972	Three Major Works Organized
1980	Youth and Women's Associations Established
1992	Daejin Medical Foundation Established
1996	Bundang Jesaeng General Hospital Opened
2007	Daesoon Jinrihoe Welfare Foundation Established
2009	Daejin Nursing Facilities Opened
2010	Daejin Youth Training Center Inaugurated
2015	Daejin Nursing Facilities Recognized
2018	Facilities Recognized

Community Business

For the purpose of welfare, Daesoon Jinrihoe established the Daesoon Men's

Association and Women's Association in 1981. These two organisations have taken leading roles in promoting social welfare through their continuous activities such as: Saemaeul (New Community) movement, Nature conservation campaign, Traffic safety campaign, Street cleaning, Crime prevention, helping farmers, finding missing children and a movement for respecting the elderly (AADDJ 2017 ,75).

Medical Enterprises

As the nation of Korea has worked towards a welfare society in the 1990s-2010s, there have been efforts not just to promote continued economic growth but also to systematically improve the national medical service. Medical enterprises are aimed at realizing the religious ideologies of Daesoon Jinrihoe. With the establishment of its medical foundation, Daesoon Jinrihoe is committed to improving people's health through research and the development of healthcare treatment as well as human resource training (AADDJ 2017, 79).

Bundang Jesaeng Hospital

Bundang Jesaeng Hospital, also known as Daejin Medical Center, is a major general hospital located in Seohyeon-dong, Bundang-gu, Seongnam, South Korea. It was established on January 15, 1995, by the Daejin Medical Foundation, which is affiliated with the religious organization Daesoon Jinrihoe. Certified by Korean medical authorities as a reliable and innovative healthcare provider, the hospital is equipped with advanced diagnostic and treatment technologies and has become a key medical institution in the region. The hospital integrates a volunteer system to extend its outreach and improve patient care. The institution features state-of-the-art equipment, including 3D angiography devices, dental panoramic CT, and other cutting-edge diagnostic tools (AADDJ 2017, 79).

As of recent data, Bundang Jesaeng Hospital operates with a capacity of 760 beds and comprises 31 medical departments and 11 specialized centers. The hospital staff includes approximately 1,550 members, and over a span of 15 years, more than 9.32 million patients received treatment, with over 170,000 surgical procedures performed (Daejin Medical Center, n.d.). The hospital has also developed advanced treatment systems for four major cancers: gastric, colorectal, breast, and lung cancer. In addition to departments such as general surgery, orthopaedic surgery, neurosurgery, chest surgery, plastic surgery, obstetrics and gynecology, pediatrics and adolescent medicine, ophthalmology, otolaryngology, and dermatology, the hospital also leads in medical informatization. It pioneered Korea's first integrated information system combining Order Communication Systems (OCS), Picture Archiving and Communication Systems (PACS), and Electronic Medical Records (EMR), enabling fast, paperless, and accurate patient care (Daejin Medical Center, n.d.).

Table 2. Key Statistics of Bundang Jesaeng Hospital (Daejin Medical Center)
(Source: Daejin Medical Center 2021)

Category	Count / Total	Description
Patients Treated (15 years)	9,320,000	Total number of patients treated over 15 years
Surgical Procedures (15 years)	170,000	Number of surgeries performed in 15 years
Staff Members	1,550	Total medical and administrative staff
Departments	31	Clinical and administrative departments
Specialized Centers	11	Centers focusing on specific medical areas
Bed Capacity	760	Number of available hospital beds

Bundang Jesaeng Hospital operates under a strong philanthropic philosophy that aligns with the teachings of Daesoon Jinrihoe, including principles such as "Save people from hardship and unfortunate situations" and "Strive to live together and untangle resentment" The institution aims to promote national health and contribute to a welfare society through treatment, research, medical technology development, and the training of medical professionals. Trainees are taught to uphold the dignity of human life and to serve with benevolence and compassion. Reflecting Daesoon Jinrihoe's broader ethos of humanitarian outreach, the hospital has extended its services internationally. In August 2015, the International Medical Volunteer Corps was launched to provide medical care to ethnic Koreans and others in underserved regions of Kyrgyzstan. More recently, during the COVID-19 outbreak in March 2020, Bundang Jesaeng Hospital played a crucial role in the treatment of infected patients within South Korea (AADDJ 2017).

Welfare Enterprises

The Daesoon Jinrihoe established the Daesoon Jinrihoe Welfare Foundation in June 2007 with the aim of realizing social well-being through its core doctrine of Mutual Beneficence. This foundation was created to uphold the intentions of Park Wudang, the founder of Daesoon Jinrihoe, and to implement the organization's social welfare ideology based on the principle of Mutual Beneficence. The foundation seeks to enhance the quality of life by quantitatively expanding social welfare services and improving their overall quality. These efforts are carried out through systematically planned and implemented annual social welfare projects. Daesoon Jinrihoe's welfare enterprises are generally categorized into three divisions: the Medical Care Institute, the Medical Care Hospital, and the Senior Welfare Centre. With deep roots in Korean cultural traditions, elderly welfare is a particular priority for Daesoon Jinrihoe. In October 2009, to better meet the needs of the elderly population, Daesoon Jinrihoe established a welfare complex in Yeoju. This facility includes a Geriatric Hospital, Elderly Nursing Facilities, and an Elderly Welfare Center, which accommodate 140, 170, and 30 individuals respectively (AADDJ 2017, 80).

The Daejin Medical Care Institute is well known for treating its residents with dignity and respect, fostering a family-like atmosphere. The Institute offers seven major

programs: leisure and dementia prevention, medical treatment and rehabilitation, cultural services, counseling services, nutritional support, family support, and sanitation services. Leisure programs include activities such as film appreciation and production, singing, music, origami, pottery, games, outings, and birthday celebrations. Dementia prevention programs involve physical exercise, laughter therapy, block building, puzzles, and drawing. Cultural services include celebrations for feast days, Parents' Day, spring and autumn picnics, and performances by volunteers. Nutritional services provide functional diets, refreshments, seasonal meals, and hygiene-focused food management (Soryte 2022, 93–94).

The concept of a "homelike atmosphere" is a significant expression of Daesoon Thought. In alignment with this philosophy, Daesoon Jinrihoe has constructed hospitals and nursing homes designed to resemble ordinary homes rather than institutional facilities (AADDJ 2017, 80). One notable example is the Daejin Elderly Nursing Facility, which employs a Unit Care System—an arrangement consisting of eight to twelve single-occupancy rooms per unit and a communal living room that offers a warm and domestic environment. This facility has consistently received an A-grade rating from the National Health Insurance Corporation for service and facility quality for three consecutive years starting in 2013. Due to its innovative approach to elderly care, the Daejin Elderly Nursing Facility has garnered significant international attention. Visitors from countries such as China and Vietnam have shown interest in the Unit Care System and its effectiveness in elderly welfare.

Charitable Aid

The followers of Daesoon Jinrihoe carried out charity works based on the teaching: "Do the best to give love and hope to people neglected by society, by helping them to stand up and begin new lives on their own". Followers consider charity aid as an activity which supports the victims of natural disasters and helps people in need. Park Wudang founded the foundation of the Daesoon Men's Association and Daesoon Women's Association in1981, they have been continuously providing aid to orphans, the disabled, and neglected children while giving out daily necessities to low-income neighbourhoods and participating in campaigns to support the flood victims (AADDJ 2017, 75). In 2009, they began overseas charity aids in Kenya and Ethiopia (Africa) through the projects of digging wells and relief supplies. There are also services where they offer volunteers from the general populace, elderly citizens, individuals or youth groups. In regards to doing charity work, they founded two foundations which are The Daejin International Volunteers Association (DIVA) and Daesoon Foundation. (AADDJ 2017, 76)

Daesoon Foundation

Daesoon Foundation is a Korean Daoist organization based in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area. It was founded in 2010 and officially recognized as a nonprofit

organization in 2017. (Daesoon Foundation, n.d.b.) The foundation provides spiritual counseling, therapeutic services, interfaith dialogue initiatives, conflict resolution programs, and peacebuilding activities rooted in Daoist principles. As a nonprofit Daoist charity organization, it is committed to fostering equity, equality, and humanitarian cooperation between the United States and Korea (Daesoon Foundation, n.d.c.). The foundation engages in various charitable endeavors, including local, national, and international grantmaking, as well as community-based services aimed at supporting marginalized and underserved populations. It provides spiritual guidance through educational seminars, meditation practices, and Daoist ceremonial observances, thereby promoting well-being and intercultural understanding. The foundation's charitable philosophy is grounded in the Daoist concept of "Sangsaeng" (mutual life-giving). "Sang" signifies mutual complementarity and interconnection among all beings, while "Saeng" literally means life, representing how individuals give life to each other through relationships based on mutual respect. This understanding of interdependence is central to Daoist ethics and encourages the cultivation of compassion and non-judgmental awareness (Daesoon Foundation, n.d.d.).

Sangsaeng is further structured around two foundational principles of Dao: Haewon Sangsaeng and Boeun Sangsaeng. Haewon refers to the resolution of grievances, emphasizing the importance of healing historical and interpersonal resentments. Boeun signifies the return of grace or repaying benevolence, which reflects gratitude and the moral responsibility to honor the support one has received from deities, ancestors, nature, and fellow human beings. Through the integration of these two principles, the Daesoon Foundation promotes Sangsaeng as a pathway to communal harmony and lasting peace (Daesoon Foundation 2025d). Daesoon Foundation is engaged with many charity works such as Environment Stewardship, Children in Need, Healthcare Support, and Food Security.

Environment Stewardship

Environmental or planetary stewardship is a major concern for many of the world's religious traditions. Almost every religion underscores the responsibility of caring for the environment as essential to ensuring a healthy, secure, and sustainable future for current and future generations. In Islam, the Earth is regarded as a divine trust, and human beings are viewed as khalifah (stewards or caretakers) responsible for its protection (Foltz 2003; Izzi Dien 2000). Judaism similarly affirms that the land belongs to God, and humans are tasked with tending and preserving it (*Genesis* 2:15). Christianity shares this view, regarding creation as a divine gift, and emphasizing human responsibility for stewardship and ecological care (DeWitt 2000; Santmire 1985). In East Asian thought, Lao Tzu in Daoism advocates for harmony with nature, seeing humans as part of the natural order and not above it (Chan 1963). Confucianism also stresses the interdependence of humans and the environment, advocating for responsible living and ecological ethics (Tucker and Berthrong 1998). The Cao Dai religion likewise emphasizes

environmental protection, urging the proper treatment of the biological, botanical, and mineral worlds, considering humans as stewards of nature (Hoskins 2015). Similarly, the American ecologist Aldo Leopold (1949) proposed a "land ethic" in which he wrote: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (Leopold 1949, 224). His vision of ethical responsibility toward ecosystems aligns closely with religious understandings of stewardship.

In the context of Korean new religions, Daesoon Jinrihoe also advances a vision of environmental stewardship that resonates with the environmental ethics found in many of the world's religious traditions. According to the Daesoon Foundation (2025e), co-existence with nature through environmental care not only ensures health and security but also guarantees a lasting legacy for future generations—thus preserving the "beauty of the biotic community." The Foundation actively participates in environmental volunteerism to support ecological restoration and sustainability. For example, it collaborates with local park authorities to remove invasive plant species that endanger native ecosystems and migratory bird habitats. Volunteers help clear invasive flora and prepare the land for reseeding native plants. Additionally, the Foundation organizes annual community cleanup days aimed at preventing litter from entering waterways. Volunteers are assigned to polluted watersheds and provided with tools such as trash pickers, recycling bags, gloves, and reflective vests to assist in cleaning up the urban environment (Daesoon Foundation 2025e). Through these actions, Daesoon Jinrihoe reflects a global religious ethic of environmental stewardship—one rooted in reverence for the Earth and a commitment to its well-being for all living beings.

Children in Need

Millions of children around the world are reportedly experiencing separation from their families, a crisis with far-reaching intergenerational, physical, and psychological consequences. This issue transcends economic boundaries, affecting low-, middle-, and high-income countries alike. South Korea is no exception, facing similar challenges regarding the welfare of children in need of alternative care solutions. In response to this growing concern, the Daesoon Foundation, as a volunteer organization affiliated with Daesoon Jinrihoe, has prioritized initiatives aimed at supporting children in foster care and those separated from their families. As part of its comprehensive volunteer efforts, the foundation not only supports children in the foster care system but also collaborates with both local and national organizations to provide in-kind donations and holistic care (Daesoon Foundation 2025f). Such efforts reflect a growing global movement that recognizes the importance of community-based alternative care and psychosocial support for children who are deprived of parental care. Scholars have emphasized that stable, nurturing environments and consistent social support can significantly mitigate the long-term impacts of familial separation. The Daesoon Foundation's work in this area not only addresses immediate material needs but also

contributes to the long-term resilience and wellbeing of affected children.

Healthcare Support

Daesoon Foundation focuses on providing resources and aid to the community through partnerships with the local government and healthcare agencies. The volunteers have been trained in mental health first aid, CPR, and victim advocacy to educate and connect resources for those in need. During COVID pandemic, their major project was the mask making project as well as meditation to promote mental health. They also have a partnership with VITAS healthcare and made posters and decorated cars to show support and thanks to the workers during COVID pandemic. The organisation has a program called BRAW (Bringing Resource to Aid Women's Shelter) which provides menstrual supplies and undergarments to women and children in crisis, who do not have the access to basic needs. The organisation raises funds and in-kind donations to support the women and girls in our community and abroad. BRAWS also provides aid to earthquake victims in Haiti, Afghan and Ukrainian refugees, women and girls in shelters and schools, and those affected by the Pandemic (Daesoon Foundation 2025g).

Food Security

Daesoon foundation focuses on partnerships with local organisations to provide food and assistance to neighbours in need. Their one of the main programs is the sandwiches for neighbours in need. They make more than 30,000 sandwiches each year. Another program is Food and Friends who provide fresh meals and groceries at no cost to people with AIDS and other life-challenging illnesses living in the metro area. The volunteers made soups and salads as well as a wide range of homemade products and packed foods for distribution (Daesoon Foundation 2025).

Daejin International Volunteers Association (DIVA)

The Daejin International Volunteers Association (DIVA) was officially established on August 1, 2013, as a humanitarian affiliate of Daesoon Jinrihoe, with the purpose of engaging in systematic, sustained charity and relief work. Rooted in the religious tenet that salvation through faith must be actualized through compassionate and concrete action, DIVA exemplifies the practical application of Daesoon Jinrihoe's core value of Mutual Beneficence—a principle emphasizing mutual support and harmony as a pathway to societal and spiritual advancement. DIVA's mission is to support and rehabilitate underprivileged populations both within South Korea and internationally. The timeline graph below presents the successive initiatives of the Daejin International Volunteers Association (DIVA) from 2013 to 2016, with each milestone reflecting the organization's expanding role in structured, faith-based humanitarian engagement.

Table 3. Successive Initiatives of Daejin International Volunteers Association (DIVA 2016b)

Year	Initiative / Achievement	Description
2013	Establishment of DIVA	Official founding of the Daejin International Volunteers Association (Aug. 1, 2013)
2014	Recognized as Outstanding Volunteering Organization	Designated for excellence in volunteer service (2014)
2015	Designated as Official Donation Body	Approved as an official donation organization (2015)
2016	Registered as NGO for International Relief	Acquired NGO status for international relief activities (2016)

In addition to successive initiatives of Daejin International Association (DIVA), we can, for example, glance at its some important volunteering and charitable activities such as throug the following timeline table.

Moreover, through its evolving scope and consistent dedication, DIVA exemplifies Daesoon Jinrihoe's efforts to realize religious teachings through concrete actions that address the needs of marginalized communities. It reflects a religious commitment to not only spiritual development but also practical humanitarian engagement through its commitment "service is the practice of coexistence and a conduit of empathy." There are two further main areas of engagement run by DIVA such as Domestic Business and Overseas Business.

Table 4. Key milestones in Daesoon Jinrihoe's charitable and volunteer efforts from 1972–2019. (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2025C)

Year / Period	Activity / Initiative	Description
1972	Three Major Works organized	70% of budget allocated to charity, welfare, and education.
1973–1985	Formation of Youth and Women's Associations	Organized to promote volunteerism and social service.
1979–1984	Student Council Activities	Engaged in environmental and social service efforts.
2004–2009	Kenya and Ethiopia Aid Projects	International aid activities supporting education and welfare.
2012	Emergency Snow Removal	Volunteer response to severe winter weather conditions.
2013–2015	International Volunteer Corps	Launched volunteer teams for domestic and international missions.
2014	Taean Oil Spill Volunteer Support	Organized volunteers for environmental recovery efforts.
2016	School Supplies and Support for Underprivileged	Donations and educational aid provided to children in need.
2018–2019	NGO Status in Vietnam and School Construction	Established formal NGO presence and built schools abroad.
2019	Holiday Donations and COVID-19 Early Relief	Massive donation campaigns for pandemic support and holiday aid.

Domestic Business

Since its inception, the Daejin International Volunteers Association (DIVA) has demonstrated a consistent commitment to comprehensive social welfare, particularly for vulnerable populations in Yeoju City and beyond. One of its earliest domestic initiatives, the heating oil and coal support program, began in 2013 and continues to provide

essential heating aid to elderly individuals living alone in inadequately insulated homes during severe winter months (DIVA 2016c). This initiative mitigates health and safety risks associated with cold weather, such as hypothermia and isolation, which are especially prevalent among low-income elderly populations. In addition to thermal assistance, DIVA conducts monthly home repair services to address structural hazards and unsanitary conditions found in older residential units. These services include electrical safety upgrades, flooring replacement, wall and ceiling repair, painting, and general sanitation efforts. Such interventions promote housing safety, which is a critical determinant of public health and well-being (World Health Organization [WHO] 2018).

Recognizing the importance of consistent nutrition and human interaction, DIVA operates the Love Side Dish Sharing program, delivering homemade meals to 25 households twice a month. This effort not only alleviates food insecurity but also ensures regular wellness check-ins for elderly residents, thereby reducing social isolation. Complementary programs such as kimchi sharing, seasonal food donations (including rice, ramen, and beef), and holiday gift assistance further support marginalized families and individuals, especially during culturally significant seasons. DIVA also facilitates the distribution of essential goods, including school supplies, diapers, blankets, televisions, and direct financial aid. These contributions serve to enhance recipients' quality of life and provide vital resources for daily living. To foster cultural vitality and lifelong learning, DIVA offers traditional arts training in Samulnori and Nanta for residents and senior citizens. Educational programs in Korean traditional music are also provided to children participating in rural immersion experiences in Yeoju. Furthermore, the Youth Futsal Training program, conducted by certified coaches, promotes physical health, confidence, and social integration among local youth.

Table 5. Distribution of DIVA's Charitable and Cultural Activities (DIVA 2016d)

Category	Description
Disaster Relief	Oil spill, floods, fires
Home Repairs and Cleaning	Volunteer housing maintenance
Cultural and Educational Programs	Samulnori, Nanta, Futsal
Essential Goods Distribution	Basic necessities for underprivileged
Meal Programs	Side dishes, kimchi
Support for Youth Camps and Public Events	Includes camps, community events
Winter Heating Support	Oil/coal distribution for heating
General Welfare Assistance	School supplies, blankets, etc.

Cultural engagement is further enhanced through DIVA's organization of performances, including Pungmul and modern fusion Nanta, which encourage community participation and improve emotional well-being. DIVA also supports large-scale events by providing meal services for youth camps and managing parking operations for public gatherings. In times of national crisis, DIVA swiftly mobilizes for disaster relief efforts, having contributed aid during the Taean Peninsula oil spill, Cheonan floods, Sokcho wildfires, and various heavy snowstorms. These responses

highlight the organization's capacity for emergency intervention and its commitment to nationwide humanitarian support (DIVA 2016d).

Overseas Business

The Daejin International Volunteers Association (DIVA) extends its mission of humanitarian service beyond South Korea through a wide range of impact-driven projects designed to enhance the well-being of individuals and communities in underserved and disaster-affected regions worldwide. Following its previous humanitarian efforts in Ethiopia, DIVA has increasingly concentrated on Vietnam, where it is constructing cultural centers and residential facilities aimed at assisting victims of Agent Orange and orphaned children. These initiatives contribute to the long-term improvement of living standards, psychosocial support, and education within impoverished communities, aligning with global frameworks on post-conflict rehabilitation. In Vietnam, DIVA provides continuous humanitarian assistance to families affected by Agent Orange, a toxic herbicide used during the Vietnam War, which continues to cause multigenerational health issues. This support includes daily necessities, financial aid, and assistive devices, directly targeting the compounded vulnerabilities faced by these populations. Sustained foreign aid plays a vital role in alleviating the long-term consequences of Agent Orange exposure in rural Vietnamese provinces. DIVA also supplies medical equipment and essential medicines to healthcare facilities experiencing chronic shortages. Furthermore, it delivers school supplies and wheelchairs to special needs institutions and offers scholarships to academically promising students from low-income backgrounds—efforts that promote educational equity and social mobility.

Table 6. DIVA's Overseas Humanitarian Activities

Category	Description
Medical Missions in Low-Income Countries	Volunteer medical services in developing nations
Support for Agent Orange Victims and Orphans (Vietnam)	Humanitarian aid and rehabilitation support
Delivery of Medical Supplies and Equipment	Provision of medicines and medical devices abroad
Disaster Relief Abroad	International emergency aid for disasters
Cultural Exchange Programs	MOUs, cultural events, performances
Educational Support	Scholarships, school supplies, wheelchairs

In response to global disasters, DIVA mobilizes rapidly to deliver relief supplies in person, ensuring both material aid and emotional support. This hands-on model reflects a humanitarian ethos rooted in compassionate presence and sustained engagement, traits that enhance the psychological resilience of beneficiaries during post-disaster recovery. One of DIVA's most distinctive initiatives is its annual international medical

mission, conducted in partnership with the Daejin Medical Foundation and Bundang Jesaeng Hospital. These missions deploy specialized medical teams from diverse departments—such as family medicine, neurosurgery, ophthalmology, otolaryngology, radiology, rehabilitation, pharmacy, nursing, and social work—to regions where access to advanced healthcare remains limited or nonexistent. Equipped with state-of-the-art diagnostic and treatment devices, these teams provide free health check-ups, diagnoses, and treatments, often for individuals receiving professional care for the first time (DIVA, n.d.d). Recipients have reported a profound sense of gratitude, with many describing the care as life-altering and dignifying. In addition to its medical and relief operations, DIVA places strong emphasis on cultural diplomacy and mutual understanding. Its Vietnam-based cultural exchange programs are designed to foster interpersonal connection and cross-cultural appreciation. These include:

1. Signing MOUs with organizations such as the Korea-Vietnam Friendship Association.
2. Visiting schools, orphanages, nursing homes, and universities to build connections.
3. Hosting interactive events like balloon art, nail art, one-act plays, picture frame making, and temporary tattoos.
4. Sharing and enjoying traditional performances from the host country to create genuine moments of cross-cultural dialogue and connection.

Conclusion

In sum, the current study takes the significant role of the principle of "Reciprocity and Mutual Beneficence" into a serious consideration in order to understand how it motivates and shapes the mindset of the followers of Daesoon Jinrihoe in connection with their social engagements in terms of humanitarian services within and beyond their community. Indeed, this principle appears in the current study as a motivational force that mentally prepares followers to produce all positive, constructive and integrating outcomes through their social engagements such as education, social welfare and charitable aid. Theologically speaking, this reflects the function of practical theology in world religions. Similarly, the practical theology of Daesoon Jinrihoe, grounded in its principle of "Reciprocity and Mutual Beneficence" seems to have served the same purpose. Additionally, the followers are motivated by Kang Jeungsan's "Reordering Work of Heaven and Earth," which inspires them to contribute to the creation of a new cosmic harmony through their aforementioned societal engagements. Thus understood, their active engagement in these fields is deeply rooted in the practical theological principles of Reciprocity and Mutual Beneficence, and the Reordering Work of Heaven and Earth.

These doctrines not only shape their worldview but also inspire morally grounded volunteerism and service, reflecting the lived expression of Daesoon theology in contemporary social contexts. The synthesis of belief and practice within Daesoon

Jinrihoe exemplifies how religion, when holistically integrated, can generate meaningful social outcomes. In this framework we can argue that aforementioned religious beliefs of Daesoon Jinrihoe are not isolated from action but are intimately connected to concrete practices, including charitable initiatives, educational programs, and welfare services towards building a better world. This aspiration aligns with the vision of creating an earthly paradise, akin to the Christian concept of the Kingdom of God. The underlying message of Daesoon Jinrihoe's teachings offers a compelling call to all world religions: to reawaken their commitment to the common good. This imperative, deeply embedded in the theological traditions of diverse faiths, is vital for fostering global cooperation, peace, and mutual upliftment in today's pluralistic world.

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Conflict of Interest

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

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Blue Rooster Pagoda as an Introduction to Traditional East Asian Cosmology within Daesoon Jinrihoe

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Original Articles

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Abstract

This research considers the Korean new religious movement, Daesoon Jinrihoe (大巡眞理會), in the larger context of East Asian thought, by outlining the religious symbology of the Blue Rooster Pagoda (青鷄塔 *Kr cheonggyetap*) at Yeoju Headquarters Temple Complex. From the time of ancient civilizations into the present, metaphysical thinkers have drawn an array of paradigms from the natural world, to detect correspondences between material and spiritual realities and maximize their benefits. In both the East and West, systems such as geomancy, astrology, and different organic taxonomies have offered intricate understandings of the cosmic order. Completed in April of 1988, Blue Rooster Pagoda at Yeoju Headquarters Temple Complex has become an iconic image closely associated with Daesoon Jinrihoe. Aside from its clear aesthetic beauty, Blue Rooster Pagoda is also useful in introducing the East Asian Natural Philosophy contained within Daesoon Theology and highlighting how this Korean religion has developed novel symbols of its own. Some of the subject matter depicted on the pagoda is similar to content found across many Chinese traditions. Examples would include the second and third layers of the pedestal (座臺, *jwadae*) and the upper and lower sections of the body (塔身部, *tapshinbu*) which correspond to the four symbolic celestial animals (四神 *Kr sa-shin*), the twelve deities of the Chinese Zodiac (十二神將 *Kr shibi-shinjang*), the twenty-four deities in charge of the seasonal divisions (二十四節候 *Kr ishipsa-jeolhu*), and the twenty-eight deities in charge of the constellations (二十八宿 *Kr ishibpal-su*). However, the Ox-Seeking Pictures (尋牛圖 *Kr shimudo*) on the first layer of the pedestal and the symbolism of the nine-round-stone finial (相輪部, *sangnyunbu*) both require special care as their significance differs considerably from even their nearest counterparts in Chinese Natural Philosophy. This exploration of religious symbology will use Blue Rooster Pagoda as a springboard to explain the meaning of East Asian Natural Philosophy in Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Keywords: Blue Rooster Pagoda; Daesoon Jinrihoe; Yeoju Headquarter Temple Complex; East Asian Natural Philosophy

Introduction

In his schema of religious "dimensions," the scholar Ninian Smart identified the "aesthetic" as a major element. Aesthetics vary among traditions as some place high value on simplicity in worship and artistic expression. Walking into a meetinghouse of the Religious Society of Friends (perhaps more commonly known as Quakers) to attend unprogrammed worship, one might silently enter into a plain building, sit on a bench wherein there is no wrong place to sit, and remain in silent prayer for roughly an hour, in an experience sometimes described as "waiting worship." Quaker facilities contain no iconography (Abbott 2012, 352). On the other end of the spectrum of religious experience, a first-time visitor to the Yeoju Headquarters Temple Complex of the Korean new religious movement, Daesoon Jinrihoe, will be thrust into a highly ornate sacred space replete with symbols on top of symbols on top of symbols. How intricate is the symbology of Daesoon Jinrihoe's temple complexes? It is internally acknowledged as so sophisticated that newly initiated members are encouraged to attend temple acclimation (參拜 *Kr* [1] *chambae*) sessions wherein they will receive guided tours of the temple to be provided with explanations of the temple structures, statues, wall murals, and fixtures as the guide instructs them on temple etiquette. If that is what is deemed best for Korean initiates, who presumably have some cultural exposure to certain basic symbols, one can only imagine how much more daunting the task of religious cultural literacy can be for non-Korean temple visitors or initiates.

Fortunately, there is one structure at Daesoon Jinrihoe's Yeoju Headquarters Temple Complex that is so dense with key symbols that it can serve as a sort of Rosetta's Stone to inform outsiders of many key themes for understanding both Daesoon Jinrihoe's use of traditional East Asian natural philosophy and the novel visual representation of teachings unique to the movement. The aforementioned structure is known as *Cheonggye*-tap (青鷄塔) or 'Blue Rooster Pagoda' as it is known in English. Although built in April of 1988, relatively late in the early history of Daesoon Jinrihoe (which was founded in 1969), Blue Rooster Pagoda went on to become one of Daesoon Jinrihoe's most iconic images. At the order's headquarters in Yeoju, images of Blue Rooster Pagoda appear on many items that are given out as souvenirs to visitors such as journals, business card holders, and usb drives. It is easily within the top five images that Daesoon Jinrihoe uses on posters or book covers when tasked with visually representing their religious order to the outside world.

The Origin of East Asian Pagoda

East Asian pagodas originate from Buddhist stupas, monumental structures that served as repositories for sacred relics and focal points for Buddhist devotional practice. Most historians working in the field of Buddhist architecture and art history agree that stupas were first introduced to China via the remarkably talented Nepalese architect,

Araniko (1245–1306), a figure whose influence on East Asian Buddhist architecture cannot be overstated. Araniko's transformative mission to Yuan China lasted from his late teenage years, when he first arrived as a promising young craftsman, until his death at the age of sixty-two, during which time he fundamentally shaped the architectural vocabulary that would define Buddhist sacred structures throughout East Asia for centuries to come. His long tenure in China allowed him not only to design and oversee the construction of numerous significant Buddhist structures but also to train generations of Chinese craftsmen in the sophisticated architectural techniques he brought from Nepal, ensuring that his architectural innovations would be preserved and developed long after his death.

As for the eventual appearance and development of these architectural forms on the Korean peninsula, a region that would develop its own distinctive stupa traditions, the earliest stupas likely appeared alongside the introduction of Buddhism itself during the fourth century, a pivotal period in Korean religious and cultural history. Buddhism's arrival marked a fundamental transformation in Korean spiritual life, and the construction of stupas represented tangible, physical manifestations of this new religious tradition taking root in Korean soil. However, since those earliest stupas would necessarily have been constructed primarily of wood, the most readily available and easily worked building material in the heavily forested Korean peninsula, none from that early time period are left remaining today. The perishable nature of wooden construction, combined with the destructive forces of fire, warfare, and simple decay over the passage of sixteen centuries, means that scholars must rely on textual descriptions, archaeological evidence, and comparative analysis with later structures to understand what these earliest Korean stupas might have looked like.

As for the earliest examples among those Korean stupas that do in fact remain[2] and can be studied directly today, several remarkable structures survive to provide tangible connections to Korea's early Buddhist architectural heritage. The Nine-story Wooden Pagoda (九層木塔誌 *Kr gucheung moktapji*), constructed in 645 CE at the historically significant Hwangnyong-sa Temple (皇龍寺) in Gyeongju, the ancient capital of the Silla Kingdom, represents the earliest surviving wooden pagoda structure(Encyclopedia of Korean Culture n.d.b) on the Korean peninsula. This impressive multi-story structure, with its nine ascending levels symbolizing Buddhist cosmological concepts, demonstrates the sophisticated woodworking techniques and architectural understanding that Korean craftsmen had achieved by the mid-seventh century. The pagoda's survival for nearly fourteen centuries stands as testament both to the quality of its original construction and to the care with which successive generations have maintained and preserved this irreplaceable cultural treasure.

Whereas the Nine-story Wooden Pagoda at Hwangnyong-sa represents the earliest wooden example, Korea also possesses remarkably early stone stupas that have survived the intervening centuries with less need for extensive restoration and maintenance. The Mireuksaji Stone Pagoda (彌勒寺址石塔 *Kr mireuk-saji seoktap*), constructed in 639

CE in Iksan(Go and Yi 2017, 290), predates even the wooden pagoda at Hwangnyong-sa by six years, making it one of the very oldest surviving Buddhist structures on the Korean peninsula. This stone pagoda, dedicated to Maitreya Buddha (the future Buddha), represents an early Korean attempt to translate wooden architectural forms into the more permanent medium of stone, creating a structure that could endure for millennia rather than mere centuries. The technical challenges involved in carving and stacking massive stone blocks to create a stable, aesthetically pleasing multi-story structure should not be underestimated, as they required sophisticated understanding of structural engineering, stone-working techniques, and aesthetic principles.

Alongside the Mireuksaji Stone Pagoda as one of Korea's earliest stone stupas stands the Imitation Brick Pagoda (模塼石塔, *Kr mojeon seok-tap*) at Bunhwang-sa Temple (芬皇寺), constructed in 634 CE(Encyclopedia of Korean Culture n.d.c) in Gyeongju, making it five years older than the Mireuksaji pagoda and thus the very oldest surviving stone stupa in Korea. The name "Imitation Brick Pagoda" reflects the structure's fascinating design, which uses carefully carved stone blocks to mimic the appearance of fired brick construction, a building technique that was known in Korea through contact with Chinese architectural traditions but was not commonly employed in Korean construction. This architectural choice represents a sophisticated attempt to reference Chinese Buddhist architectural precedents while adapting those foreign forms to Korean materials, techniques, and aesthetic sensibilities. Together, these three surviving seventh-century pagodas—one wooden and two stone—provide invaluable evidence for understanding how Buddhist architectural traditions were received, adapted, and transformed on the Korean peninsula during the crucial formative period of Korean Buddhist culture.

The original function of Buddhist stupas, dating back to the earliest periods of Buddhist history in ancient India, was to serve as repositories that would house the carefully enshrined relics of the historical buddha, Śākyamuni, known as *śarīra* (舍利, *Kr sari*) in Sanskrit. These physical remains, recovered from the Buddha's cremation following his death and entry into final *nirvana* (*parinirvāṇa*), were considered supremely sacred objects that maintained a direct physical connection to the enlightened teacher who had walked the earth. According to traditional accounts preserved in early Buddhist texts, these precious relics were initially divided among eight different kingdoms and communities, each of which constructed stupas to house their portion of the Buddha's remains, creating pilgrimage sites where devotees could pay homage and accumulate spiritual merit through acts of reverence and devotion. The physical presence of these relics within the stupas transformed these architectural structures into something far more than mere monuments—they became living presences of the Buddha himself, focal points for devotional practice and tangible connections to the historical founder of the Buddhist tradition.

Later in Buddhist history, as the religion spread geographically and developed institutionally over the centuries following the Buddha's death, the remains of arhats

(enlightened disciples who had achieved liberation from the cycle of rebirth) and other similarly regarded Buddhist figures of exceptional spiritual accomplishment also received this same reverential treatment. This expansion of relic veneration reflected the growing complexity of Buddhist communities and their recognition that spiritual attainment and worthiness of veneration extended beyond the historical Buddha alone. Accomplished meditation masters, renowned scholars who had preserved and transmitted the dharma, and exemplary monastics who had embodied Buddhist ideals in their lives all came to be seen as deserving of the honor of having their remains enshrined in stupas. This development represented a natural evolution in Buddhist practice, as expanding communities sought to honor their own spiritual lineages and create local pilgrimage sites connected to teachers and masters who had directly impacted their particular regions and traditions.

Later still, demonstrating the remarkable theological creativity and adaptability of Buddhist thought, this practice of enshrinement was extended conceptually to encompass other sacred 'bodies' in a more abstract and metaphorical sense. This expansion moved beyond the literal, physical remains of enlightened beings to include spiritual and textual embodiments of Buddhist truth and wisdom. For example, sophisticated theological terms such as 'relics of the dharma body (法身舍利 *Kr beopshin sari*)' emerged within Buddhist discourse, representing a fundamental reconceptualization of what could constitute a relic worthy of enshrinement. This term drew upon the important Mahāyāna Buddhist doctrine of the three bodies (trikāya) of the Buddha—the physical manifestation body (nirmāṇakāya), the enjoyment body (saṃbhogakāya), and the truth or dharma body (dharmakāya)—with the dharma body representing the eternal, unchanging essence of Buddhist truth that transcends any particular physical manifestation.

The phrase 'relics of the dharma body' was most often and most characteristically an allusion applied to sacred Buddhist scriptures (sūtras) or powerful sacred incantations (*Skt* mantra, dhāraṇī, etc.) that were ritually enshrined within the stupa structure(Ko and Yi 2017, 74), typically deposited in specially prepared chambers or cavities designed to hold these precious spiritual treasures. This practice reflected the mature Buddhist understanding that the Buddha's true essence was not ultimately located in physical bone fragments or cremated remains but rather in the eternal dharma—the teachings, practices, and realizations that constituted the path to enlightenment. Sacred texts, particularly important sūtras like the Lotus Sūtra or Heart Sūtra, came to be regarded as equally valid—or even superior—manifestations of the Buddha's enlightened presence. Similarly, powerful dhāraṇī (extended mantric formulas believed to contain concentrated spiritual power) or shorter mantras could be inscribed on paper, silk, or even thin metal sheets and deposited within stupas, transforming these architectural structures into repositories of living spiritual power and presence. This theological development had profound practical implications, as it meant that stupas could be constructed and consecrated anywhere, without requiring the increasingly rare and

precious physical relics of the Buddha or accomplished masters. Communities could now create their own sacred sites by enshrining copies of scriptures or written mantras, democratizing access to stupa veneration and allowing Buddhist sacred architecture to spread far beyond the limited sites where actual bodily relics existed.

Stupas vary in form greatly even within individual countries let alone large regions. To briefly explain the common structure and symbolism that will be useful for the ultimate goal of appreciating Daesoon Jinrihoe's Blue Rooster Pagoda, attention will be given to Korean Buddhist stupas. Generally speaking, Korean stupas, and hence, pagodas by extension, are composed of three sections: the foundation (基壇部 *Kr gidanbu*), the body (塔身部 *Kr tapshinbu*), and the finial (相輪部 *Kr sangnyunbu*). The description below will prioritize discussion of Korean stone stupas as these are the most common; however, some notes will include wooden and brick stupas as structural differences are worth highlighting. The basic features commonly found in each section will be detailed below:

1) The foundation:

① Base stone (址臺石 *Kr jidaeseok*)

Naturally, stupas are built systematically from the bottom up following well-established architectural principles, and the first critical step in any stupa construction project is to carefully flatten the land through extensive site preparation and then lay down the base stone with precision. This foundational work represents the most labor-intensive phase of initial construction, often requiring teams of workers to excavate, level, and compact the earth to create a stable platform capable of supporting the immense weight of the structure that will rise above it. The base stone itself is a substantial stone element, often consisting of multiple large stone blocks carefully fitted together, that is placed at the very bottom of the stupa to keep the ground flat and stable and to prevent it from becoming concave, convex, or otherwise uneven over time due to settling, erosion, or the natural shifting of soil and subsoil layers beneath the structure.

In terms of structural soundness and long-term architectural stability, this foundational element is unquestionably the most crucial part of the entire stupa structure, given that these monuments are specifically designed and expected to endure century after century, standing firm despite continual and relentless exposure to the destructive forces of nature. These natural forces include not only the obvious threats of wind, rain, and temperature fluctuations but also the more insidious dangers of frost heaving, soil erosion, groundwater movement, seismic activity, and the gradual settling of foundations under the constant downward pressure of the structure's own massive weight. A base stone that is improperly sized, inadequately positioned, or constructed from inferior materials will inevitably lead to structural failure, sometimes within decades rather than the intended centuries or millennia of service.

Archaeological evidence from numerous sites throughout East Asia demonstrates the fundamental importance of this structural element. Some sites of stupa-ruins,

particularly those where the superstructure was destroyed by fire, warfare, or deliberate demolition, feature a mostly intact base stone and little else remaining that would indicate the presence of the once-standing stupa that formerly occupied the site. This archaeological pattern speaks volumes about the differential durability of stupa components and the engineering wisdom of ancient builders who understood that the foundation must outlast all other elements. This survival pattern occurs primarily because base stones are deliberately made to be exceptionally strong, extremely heavy, remarkably dense, and usually not particularly ornamental or decorative in nature. Unlike the more elaborate carved stones used in upper portions of stupas, which might attract the attention of looters or be repurposed for other construction projects, base stones possess little aesthetic appeal and are too massive to be easily moved or removed from their original positions.

The lack of ornamentation on base stones reflects a purely functional design philosophy focused entirely on structural performance rather than visual aesthetics. While upper portions of stupas might feature intricate carvings, decorative moldings, or inscribed texts meant to inspire devotion and communicate religious meaning, the base stone operates invisibly, buried or partially buried beneath the visible structure, performing its essential load-bearing function without need for decoration. This utilitarian approach to foundation design demonstrates the practical engineering knowledge possessed by ancient Buddhist architects and master builders, who understood intuitively what modern structural engineering has confirmed mathematically: that foundations must be overbuilt, conservative in design, and focused exclusively on stability and load distribution.

Modern building construction techniques employ concrete-paved floors, massive reinforced concrete footings, and sometimes deep pile foundations driven into bedrock to ensure structural integrity and prevent differential settling that could crack walls or cause buildings to lean or collapse. These contemporary methods represent the application of advanced materials science and structural engineering principles to achieve the same fundamental goal that ancient stupa builders pursued. But in the past, long before the invention of Portland cement and the development of reinforced concrete technology, carefully selected and precisely placed base stones served that essential foundational purpose, distributing the enormous weight of multi-story stone structures across a sufficiently large area of earth to prevent dangerous concentrations of pressure that could cause the ground to fail. The principles remain constant across the centuries—only the materials and techniques have evolved to meet the same timeless architectural challenge of creating stable, enduring foundations for monumental structures.

② Foundation-supporting Stone (基壇괴 [3]石 *Kr gidangoem seok*)

The foundation-supporting stone is a stone that serves the same purpose as base stone, but it was designed to fortify wooden stupas. These are less common in Korea

because many wooden stupas were burnt down throughout history.

③ Foundation

As for the foundation, this section consists of the foundation's face stones (基壇面石 *Kr gidan myeonseok*), corner pillars (隅柱 *Kr uju*), and, in some cases, the enlightened being pillars (撐 [4]柱 *Kr* taengju) which support the middle areas.

Face stones are placed on the foundation-supporting stone. At each corner of the foundation-supporting stone, pillar-shaped stones called 'corner pillars are erected to support the load. In some cases, additional pillars are also erected in the middle, between corner pillars to better distribute the weight. Those extra pillars are known as enlightened pillars (Baek 2011).

④ Cover Stone (甲石 *Kr gapseok*)

This is a stone that covers the foundation like a lid or cap. It is fixed on top of the foundation, and the pressure it supplies presses the stones that make up the foundation and base together firmly to secure the structure. The cover stone also maintains a flat surface for the body of the stupa.

2) The Body (塔身部 *Kr tapshinbu*)

This portion of the stupa is composed of roof stones (屋蓋石 *Kr okgaeseok*). The body of the stupa itself is the section wherein a hollow reliquary (舍利孔 *Kr sarigong*) is dug and relics are enshrined. As previously described, the stones that cover the body are called roof stones, and as might be imagined, once pieced together, they form the shape of a roof. The number of stories in a stupa is equivalent to its number of roofs. A roof support is placed on the eaves of the roof stone to reduce the damage caused by rainfall, snowfall, and similar weather conditions. Stupa-naming tends to relate to the body of the given stupa. As such, the name and the body usually provide information regarding the purpose of the stupa (Baek 2011).

3) The Finial (相輪部 *Kr* sangnyunbu)

The filial refers to the upper part of the stupa, and the most important component of the finial is the treasure wheel (寶輪 *Kr boryun*). Due to its position at the top, it is also called the top wheel (上輪 *Kr sangnyun*) or the sign of the wheel (相輪, *Kr sangnyun*).

The reason why the word *ryun* (輪), meaning wheel, is used in so many of the words for components of the finial is that the wheel is an analogy for movements that were observable in the sky such as the cyclical 'turning' of morning, daytime, evening, and night or the four seasons of each year. Consequently, the wheel became a symbol for the dharma which means not only 'religious teachings' but also 'truth' or 'law' in contexts such as the laws (and patterns) of nature. Some versions of the dharma wheel feature twenty-four spokes, and although this number has numerous meanings in Buddhism, it can allude to the 24 hours in a day or the 24 seasonal divisions that were observed by

many of the ancient societies in their practice of agriculture and general timekeeping.

From bottom to top, the finial consists of a dew-receiver (露盤 *Kr nopan*), an inverted bowl (覆鉢 *Kr bokbal*), an upturned blooming flower (仰花 *Kr anghwa*), a treasure wheel, and a treasure canopy (寶蓋 *Kr bogae*).

The dew receiver is a pedestal at the bottom of the finial. The inverted bowl is an East Asian term to describe a hemispherical dome. That was the shape of early Nepali-Indic stupas. The upturned flower is an allusion to how lotus flowers bloom toward the sky. The treasure wheel, the most important part of the finial, symbolizes the dharma wheel and those who turn the dharma wheel (buddhas, and in some cases, kings). The treasure canopy is a roof that covers the treasure wheel, and that symbolizes the authority of the ruler (historically, Buddhism was frequently supported via royal patronage) and the sanctity of the stone stupa itself (Baek 2011).

Now that the basic features of Buddhist style stupas (and pagodas by extension) have been presented, Blue Rooster Pagoda can be introduced and appreciated for its various innovations.

The Structure of Blue Rooster Pagoda

Like Korean Buddhist stupas, the Blue Rooster Pagoda is composed of foundation (pedestal), body, and finial. Surrounding the pagoda is an octagonal stone fence that represents the eight trigrams: Geon (heaven 乾 ☰, *Chn* qián), Tae (marsh 兌 ☱, *Chn* duì), Yi (fire 離 ☲, *Chn* lí), Jin (thunder 震 ☳, *Chn* zhèn), Son (wind 巽 ☴, *Chn* xùn), Gam (water 坎 ☵, *Chn* kǎn), Gan (mountain 艮 ☶, *Chn* gěn), and Gon (earth 坤 ☷, *Chn* kūn). Atop the ground inside the gate, are pebbles which represent the beings of the three realms that cry out in agony (Daesoon.org. n.d.) In the middle of those gated pebbles stands the pagoda itself. The absolute bottom section of the pagoda is a ground stone (地底石 *Kr* jijiseok) detailed to look like a lotus flower. In the Buddhist context, the growth of a lotus flower is an analogy for humans achieving buddhahood because the lotus, which is unsullied by its surroundings, grows out of muddy waters, just as enlightenment, a state beyond defilement and suffering, is nevertheless achieved from within a world characterized by defilement and suffering. Above the ground stone, is the first section of the pedestal (座臺 *Kr jwadae*) which is embossed with the Ox-Seeking Pictures (尋牛圖 *Kr shimudo*).

Daesoon Jinrihoe's Ox-seeking Pictures share a fair amount of content in common with various versions of the famous Ox Herding Pictures (牛圖 *Kr udo*) of Zen Buddhism. Thoroughly explaining the differences between the two would be outside the scope of this article; however, some examples can be highlighted here in brief. Daesoon Jinrihoe's Ox-seeking Pictures, a series of six paintings, consists of Deep Contemplation Leading to Awakening (深深有悟 *Kr shimshimyouo*), Finding and Following Heavenly Teachings (奉得神敎 *Kr bongdeukshingyo*), Diligently Practicing the Dao and Overcoming Hardships (勉而修之 *Kr myeonisuji*), Unremitting Devotion of Oneself to Dao

(誠之又誠 *Kr seongjiuseong*), Perfected Unification with Dao (道通眞境 *Kr dotongjingyeong*), and the World Enlightened by the Dao (道之通明 *Kr dojitongmyeong*). Deep Contemplation Leading to Awakening is a preliminary stage frequently described in indigenous Korean religions[5] wherein the practitioner inwardly ponders spiritual and philosophical questions thereby demonstrating their interest in pursuing spiritual cultivation. The visual depiction and written descriptions (not the aforementioned Sino-Korean titles of the paintings but additional paragraph-long passages written in modern vernacular Korean) of the next several stages, Finding and Following Heavenly Teachings, Diligently Practicing the Dao and Overcoming Hardships, and Unremitting Devotion of Oneself to Dao, correspond rather closely with the stages of Discovering Hoofprints (見跡 *Chn* jiàn jī), Glimpsing the Ox (見牛 *Chn* jiàn niú), and Taming the Ox (牧牛 *Chn* mù niú) as depicted in the Zen Ox-herding Picture series by Chan Master Kuo'an Shiyuan (廓庵師遠 *Chn Kuòān Shīyuǎn*). Daesoon Jinrihoe's Ox-seeking Picture titled, Perfected Unification with Dao, visually matches with the Zen Ox-herding Picture, Riding the Ox to Return Home (騎牛歸家 *Chn* qíniú guījiā); however, the written description of Perfected Unification with Dao touches upon aspects not only that picture but the remaining four Zen Ox-herding pictures as well (pictures 7, 8, 9, and 10 in Kuo'an Shiyuan's version). Like the first painting in the series though, the last painting in Daesoon Jinrihoe's Ox-seeking Pictures, The World Enlightened by the Dao, is also an original and novel composition. Visually, the World Enlightened by the Dao, shows the ox-seeker is no longer a child but has grown into an immortal who blissfully enjoys the fruits of his attainment and the serenity of a transformed world. The written description of this painting is not specifically about the individual spiritual cultivator and their progress, but has instead shifted into being about the future world wherein the Earthly Paradise of the Later World (後天 *Kr hucheon*) has emerged.

The second section of the pedestal displays intricate carved reliefs depicting the four symbolic celestial animals (四神 *Kr sa-shin*), a quartet of mythological creatures that hold profound significance throughout East Asian cosmology and religious iconography. These four creatures consist of the green dragon (青龍 *Kr cheongnyong*), white tiger (白虎 *Kr baekho*), vermillion bird (朱雀 *Kr jujak*), and black tortoise (玄武 *Kr hyeonmu*), each rendered with distinctive iconographic features that make them immediately recognizable to viewers familiar with East Asian religious and cultural traditions. The inclusion of these four celestial guardians on Buddhist stupas represents a fascinating synthesis of indigenous East Asian cosmological concepts with imported Indian Buddhist architectural and symbolic traditions, demonstrating how Buddhism adapted itself to local cultural frameworks as it spread throughout East Asia.

These four creatures are symbolic animals that are believed throughout East Asian traditions to protect and maintain the fundamental order of the universe, serving as cosmic guardians who ensure that the proper relationships between heaven, earth, and all beings remain in harmonious balance. Their protective function extends beyond mere physical guardianship to encompass the preservation of cosmic order itself, making them

appropriate symbols for inclusion on stupas, which were themselves understood as microcosmic representations of the Buddhist universe. They represent simultaneously the four cardinal directions of east, west, south, and north, creating a complete spatial orientation that encompasses all of horizontal space, and the four seasons of spring, autumn, summer, and winter, which together complete the annual cycle of temporal change and renewal. The green dragon specifically corresponds to the east and spring, symbolizing renewal and growth; the white tiger corresponds to the west and autumn, representing strength and the harvest; the vermillion bird corresponds to the south and summer, embodying heat and vitality; while the black tortoise corresponds to the north and winter, signifying endurance and rest. This comprehensive symbolic system integrates spatial, temporal, and elemental associations into a unified cosmological framework that would have been immediately comprehensible to sufficiently learned viewers in traditional East Asian societies.

Third section of the pedestal depicts the twelve deities of the Chinese Zodiac (十二神將 *Kr shibi-shinjang*). In the Korean context, the East Asian zodiac is a tradition that is closely related to the Medicine Buddha faith and the esoteric school of Korean Buddhism known as *Shininjong* (神印宗). Specific dating of the phenomenon has proved elusive, but at some point, these traditions developed a Buddhist appropriation of the twelve zodiac animals who were merged with the Twelve Yakṣa Generals (十二藥叉大將 *Kr shibi yakcha daejang*) mentioned in the Sutra of the Medicine Buddha (藥師經 *Kr* yaksa-gyeong) in order to make them properly 'Buddhist'. Thereupon, the Sanskrit name-bearing Yakṣa Generals, Kumbhīra (金毘羅/宮毘羅 *Kr gungbira*), Vajra (伐折羅 *Kr beoljeolla*), Mihira (迷企羅 *Kr migira*), Aṇḍīra (安底羅 *Kr anjeora*), Anila (頞儞羅 *Kr alnira*), Śaṇḍila (珊底羅 *Kr sanjeora*), Indra (因陀羅 *Kr indalla*), Pajra (波夷羅 *Kr paira*), Mahoraga (摩虎羅 *Kr mahora*), Kinnara (眞達羅 *Kr jindalla*), Catura (招杜羅 *Kr chodura*), and Vikarāla (毘羯羅 *Kr bigalla*), became associated with the zodiac animals the pig, dog, rooster, monkey, sheep, horse, snake, dragon, rabbit, tiger, ox, and rat(National Museum of Korea n.d)(in that respective order, which differs from their associations in the Shingon and Tendai orders of Japanese Buddhism- for example, in the Korean scheme, Kumbhīra was associated with the pig whereas, in Japan, his association is with the rat). This became so influential in the Korean usage of the East Asian zodiac animals that the Twelve Spirit-Generals (十二神將 *Kr shibi shinjang*, literally 'the Twelve Spirit-Generals') has become a more common standard of reference than the typical Chinese nomenclature of (十二生肖 *Chn* shí'èr shēngxiào *Kr* shibi saengso).

After the historic reunification of the Korean peninsula (668 CE), achieved when the Korean kingdom of Silla successfully conquered and absorbed the rival kingdoms of Baekje and Goguryeo with the military assistance of Tang China, the now-unified Silla kingdom adopted and standardized a distinctive architectural style of erecting stone stupas as matching pairs of east and west two stupas positioned symmetrically on either side of temple main halls. This twin-pagoda arrangement represented a significant

departure from earlier Korean Buddhist architectural practices and reflected both indigenous Korean aesthetic preferences for bilateral symmetry and Chinese Tang dynasty influences on Korean temple layout and design principles. The practice of constructing paired stupas rather than single central stupas created a visual balance within temple complexes and may have carried symbolic meaning related to Buddhist concepts of duality, complementarity, or the pairing of wisdom and compassion as twin aspects of enlightenment.

At that time in Unified Silla period temple construction, it became customary and widely practiced throughout the kingdom to engrave elaborate carved reliefs on the foundation stones of the stupa or alternatively on the stone body of the first floor level depicting the retinue of the Medicine Buddha (Bhaiṣajyaguru), the healing buddha who became enormously popular in East Asian Buddhism (Encyclopedia of Korean Culture n.d.a). These carved reliefs typically showed the Medicine Buddha accompanied by his two principal bodhisattva attendants—Sunlight Bodhisattva (Sūryaprabha) and Moonlight Bodhisattva (Candraprabha)—along with the Twelve Heavenly Generals who served as the Medicine Buddha's protective guardians and divine warriors. The prominence given to Medicine Buddha imagery in Unified Silla stupa decoration reflects the widespread popularity of Medicine Buddha worship during this period in Korean Buddhist history, as devotees sought healing from physical ailments, protection from disease and disaster, and the spiritual medicine of dharma teachings that could cure the afflictions of ignorance, attachment, and aversion. The careful positioning of these reliefs at the foundation or first-floor level ensured that worshippers circumambulating the stupas would encounter these powerful healing images at eye level, making them accessible focal points for devotional practice and meditation.

The lower body, the twenty-four deities in charge of the seasonal divisions (二十四節候 *Kr ishipsa-jeolhu*). The Twenty-Four Seasonal Divisions could also be called the twenty-four solar terms. The seasonal divisions refer to the ecliptic path of the celestial sphere, the annual orbit around the sun, which is divided into intervals every 15 degrees. Namely, one year is divided into twenty-four parts. Those are the seasonal divisions that are known in Korean as *jeolhu* (節候). *Jeol* (節), typically suggestive of a season, usually refers to a 15-day period while *hu* (候) refers to a 5-day period. Grouping three *hu* is thereby equivalent to one *jeol*. Accordingly, *jeol* system is commonly called *jeolhu*.[6] This style of terminology first appeared in Chinese classic the *Huainanzi* (淮南子) which was written in the 2nd century BCE. In those days, the Twenty-Four Seasonal Divisions became the official calendrical system. Henceforth, this calendrical system spread throughout East Asia and became applied to various productive activities such as farming. Furthermore, it was utilized in various fields including geography and human affairs and formed many cultural traditions. The Twenty-Four Seasonal Divisions reflect the meteorological changes caused by the movement of the sun.

As for why the twenty-four seasonal divisions are referred to as the twenty-four deities in charge of the seasonal divisions, this is because "... Daesoon Jinrihoe holds that the

Twenty-Four Generals who helped Emperor Taizong of Tang (李世民 *Chn Li Shimin*, 599–649) found the Tang Dynasty were incarnations of the Divine Generals of the Twenty-Four Seasonal Divisions" (DIRC 2020, 369–370).

The upper body of the pagoda displays the twenty-eight deities in charge of the constellations (二十八宿 *Kr ishibpal-su*). Similar to seasonal divisions and the deities in charge of those divisions, the number of deities in charge of the constellations also corresponds to the total number of constellations represented; in this case, twenty-eight. Likewise similar is how the deities in charge of the pagodas are also associated with historical Chinese generals. The twenty-eight constellations can be separated into the four directions as represented by the four symbolic celestial animals: the green dragon (east), white tiger (west), vermillion bird (south), and black tortoise (north). Each direction contains seven constellations (reaching the total of twenty-eight).

As for the apotheosized generals, the twenty-eight were "... meritorious subjects of Liu Xiu (劉秀, 6 BCE–57 CE), Emperor Guangwu of Later Han. In 60 CE, Emperor Ming of the Later Han dynasty honored 28 founding generals of the dynasty by painting their portraits on the Cloud Terrace (雲臺 *Chn* Yuntai) of the South Palace in the capital Luoyang. They became known as The Twenty-Eight Generals of the Cloud Terrace (or Yuntai). The Twenty-eight Generals aided Liu Xiu, of fallen royal blood, to found the Later Han" (DIRC 2020, 367–368).

Lastly, there is the finial. The finial of Daesoon Jinrihoe's Blue Rooster Pagoda has features that make it appear similar to the previously described finials of Korean Buddhist stupas. Both share an upturned blooming flower and a treasure canopy. Blue Rooster Pagoda's finial contains nine treasure disks which appear as spheres. Naturally, this is an allusion to the highest heaven, the Ninth Heaven, where the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven (九天上帝 *Kr gucheon sangje*) exercises authority over the Three Realms (三界 *Kr samgye*) of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity (天地人 *Kr cheon, ji, in*).

It is often asked why there are believed to be nine heavens of which the ninth is highest. In East Asian numerology, nine is known as the ultimate yang number (陽數之極, *Chn.* yángshù zhī jí *Kr yangsu ji geuk*). There are many possible origins for the association of 'nine' as the 'ultimate yang number.' One possibility from great antiquity is that of 'nine' being the numerical way to indicate Yang lines (陽爻 *Chn* yángyáo / *Kr yanghyo*) in Zhou dynasty divination via *The Book of Changes* (易經, *yijing* or *juyeok*(周易) as is more common in the Korean context).[7] Another reasonably ancient possibility is that 'nine' (九 *Chn* Jiǔ/ *Kr* gu) is a homophone with 'long-lasting' (久 *Chn* jiǔ / *Kr gu*). This is not only true of modern Mandarin and Sino-Korean, but it is also true in numerous other dialects and in Middle Chinese.[8] In Middle Chinese, both characters would have been pronounced as '/kɨuX/'. Perhaps due to those and other similar associations, nine became the number associated with the emperor, heaven, and the Supreme God.

Moreover, in the 'Heavenly Questions' section of *Songs of Chu* it was asked, "The spheres of heaven are said to be ninefold, who carried out that measurement?"[9] And in

one of his commentaries, the famous Neo-Confucian historian, philosopher, and poet Zhu Xi answered, "With regards to the spheres, it is said that heaven's shape is circular. Hence, (the spheres) follow (that shape). Nine is the ultimate yang number. That is why it is said that there are nine heavens."

For Daesoon Jinrihoe, when Doju Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958) enshrined Kang Jeungsan (姜甑山, 1871–1909) as *Gucheon Eungwon Nwehseong Bohwa Cheonjon Sangje* (九天應元雷聲普化天尊上帝, the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven, Celestial Worthy of Universal Creation through His Thunderbolt, the Originator with Whom All Beings Resonate), this connected Kang with a specific Daoist deity who notably is associated with a retinue of divine generals (*Kr shinjang* 신장 / 神將) as detailed in a 12th or 13th century scripture, *The Scripture of the Jade Pivot*(Pregadio 2009) (玉樞寶經 *Kr* okchu bogyeong / *Ch* yù shū bǎo jīng). The version of this scripture that most influenced the shrines and iconography of Daesoon Jinrihoe appears to be the Mount Gyeryong (鷄龍山 *Kr gyeryong san*) version from 1888 as this version has 48 divine generals, the same number enshrined by Daesoon Jinrihoe(Yin 2014). In most representations of the Daoist pantheon of deities, the Jade Emperor (玉皇, *Chn* yù huáng, *Kr* okhwang) is considered to be the highest; however, as was mentioned above, there were some minority Daoist schools, such as some of those who used *The Scripture of the Jade Pivot* as liturgy who instead regarded the Celestial Worthy of the Ninth Heaven, Performer of Universal Creation through His Thunderbolt, and the Originator with Whom All Beings Resonate (九天應元雷聲普化天尊 *Chn* jiǔtiān yìngyuán léishēng pǔhuà tiānzūn) as supreme. Although newer in origin, Daesoon Jinrihoe are also in this camp, but the additional bit of nuance would be that, for them, the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven incarnated as the historical figure, Kang Jeungsan, as an act of divine intervention to secure the salvation of all beings and the eventual emergence of an earthly paradise.

Although there are other allusions to this identity, the clearest statements of this particular identity come from the word *gucheon* (九天, the Ninth Heaven) when it appears in the earliest strata of Jeungsanist literature. *Gucheon* appears numerous times in Daesoon Jinrihoe's *The Canonical Scripture*. One especially noteworthy and representative example of the celestial location of the Supreme God being identified in this manner can be found in Chapter 1 Verse Nine of Progress of the Order from *The Canonical Scripture*. An abridged version of this verse appears as follows:

> One day, Sangje said to Kim Hyeong-Ryeol, "The western priest, Matteo Ricci (Yimadu), came to the East to build an earthly paradise, but he failed to achieve his goal because he could not reform the East due to the deplorable practices that Confucianism had amassed over a long time...
> As a result, the Dao of Heaven and the constant Dao of human affairs had been violated, and the Three Realms had been thrown into disorder. As the root of the Dao was finally exterminated, all the divine sages, buddhas, and bodhisattvas, who had existed since the dawn of time, gathered and petitioned Me in the Ninth

> Heaven to save the realm of humans and the realm of gods from the catastrophes that they were facing. Thus, I descended to the Tower of Heavenly Revelation in the Kingdom of the Great Law (Daebeopguk 大法國) in the West, and on My Great Itineration (Daesoon 大巡) throughout the whole world, at last I reached this land in the East…
>
> Then I revealed to Choe Je-u (Choi Suwun) that the great Dao is to redeem the world. Yet, he could not bring the true meaning of the great Dao to light beyond the framework of Confucianism. Therefore, in the Gapja Year (1864), I withdrew the heavenly mandate and power of divine law from him and finally came as a man in the Shinmi Year (1871)." (*Dbama* 1:9)[10]

Lastly, some explanation of the origin and significance of the name *Cheonggye*, Blue Rooster, will be useful in rounding off this exploration of Blue Rooster Pagoda as a means of understanding fundamental concepts from East Asian Natural Philosophy as they exist in Daesoon Jinrihoe.

In Daesoon Thought, the Chinese character, *cheong* (青 *Chn* qīng), meaning both blue and green (though blue is more accurate in the Daesoon Jinrihoe context), is an allusion to the Dao and also to the twelfth month (as this represents the twelve months and completion of year's worth of seasonal changes). The twelfth month alludes to the Dao because within a year's time, living beings can be observed in harmony with the seasons as they develop via states of birth, growth, maturity, and the bearing of fruit. Blue and green have ancient associations in East Asia as being colors of birth, life, and immortality. Consider for example the definition of *cheong* from the 'Interpreting Materials and Textiles (釋采帛 *Chn* shì cǎi bó)' chapter of the Eastern Han dictionary, *Interpreting Terminology* (釋名 *Chn* shì míng): "Blue (and Green), is the color of birth and all things during their time of birth."[11] In the Five Phases (五行 *Chn* wǔ xíng *Kr* ohaeng), the color of the wood phase (木 *Chn* mù *Kr* mok) is *cheong*, and *cheong* is thereby associated with spring (春 *Chn* chūn *Kr. chun*) and the East (東 *Chn* dōng *Kr dong*).

As for the rooster (鷄, *Chn.* jī *Kr gye*), it is the 10th animal among the 12 in the East Asian Zodiac.[12] In terms of time-keeping and calendrical, the hours of the rooster are from 5:00 to 6:59 PM, it marks the 8th lunar month, and also the two solar terms of that month: White Dew (白露 *Chn* Báilù, *Kr baekro*) and the Autumn Equinox (秋分 *Chn* Qiūfēn, *Kr chubun*). In complementary contrast to the color blue (associated with the East), the rooster is associated with the West.

The are other positive connotations to the rooster such as the extended analogy from *The Outer Commentary to the Book of Songs by Master Han* (韓詩外傳 *Chn.* hán shī wài zhuàn) wherein the rooster is used to symbolize the five virtues of literary refinement (文 *Chn* wén), martial aptitude (武 *Chn* wǔ), bravery (勇 *Chn* yǒng), benevolence (仁 *Chn* rén), and trustworthiness (信 *Chn* xìn). In the twenty-third verse of the second scroll of *The Outer Commentary to the Book of Songs by Master Han* it is stated:

> "On their heads, they wear a cockscomb to signify literary refinement. They have spurs on their shanks to demonstrate martial aptitude. When an enemy is before them, they are ever willing to attack, and this shows bravery. When they have gained feed, they alert one another, and this indicates their benevolence. They stand guard at night yet never fail to crow at the proper hour. Therein, they are trustworthy. Roosters embody these five virtues, and yet, you cook and eat them! Why is that?"[13]

Lastly, examining the rooster's place within the sophisticated cosmological system of the Eight Trigrams (八卦 *Chn* bā guà), one of the most ancient and foundational symbolic frameworks in Chinese philosophy and divination, the rooster corresponds specifically to the trigram *xun* (☴ 巽 *Chn* xùn) in the *Book of Changes*, one of the Five Classics of ancient Chinese literature. This trigram *xun*, composed of two solid yang lines above a broken yin line at the base, carries profound symbolic associations with wind, wood, gentleness, and penetration—qualities that resonate with the rooster's nature as a creature that heralds change and whose clarion call penetrates the darkness of night to announce the coming transformation of dawn.

This correspondence between the rooster and the *xun* trigram gives the rooster an important additional directional association beyond its primary connection to the western direction typically assigned to this creature in standard Chinese zodiacal systems. Specifically, through the *xun* trigram, the rooster gains association with the southeast, the precise direction from where dawn gradually begins its daily emergence, as the sun rises slightly south of due east during most of the year in the northern hemisphere where Chinese civilization developed. This southeastern directional correspondence carries profound symbolic significance because it connects the rooster not merely to the abstract concept of morning but to the specific geographic and astronomical reality of where light first appears on the horizon, where the daily renewal of yang energy physically manifests in the natural world.

The southeastern direction itself holds special meaning within Chinese cosmological thought as a liminal space, a threshold region where the pure yang energy of the south meets the balanced energy of the east, creating a zone of transition and transformation particularly associated with growth, development, and the early stages of manifestation. By associating the rooster with this southeastern direction, the symbolic system acknowledges the bird's role as a herald of transitions, a creature that stands at the boundary between darkness and light, between night and day, between yin and yang phases of the cosmic cycle.

This complex web of directional, seasonal, and elemental associations rounds off and completes the key symbolic logic depicted by the potent image of the 'blue rooster,' a seemingly paradoxical combination that actually represents a sophisticated synthesis of complementary meanings. The full symbolic meaning of this image can be summarized as representing an auspicious marriage or harmonious union between two seemingly opposed but actually complementary concepts: first, the completeness, wholeness, and

perfect unity of the Dao as well as the eternal vital flourishing, renewal, and generative power of spring (all powerfully alluded to and evoked by the color blue, which in East Asian color symbolism connects to the eastern direction, the wood element, and springtime growth); and second, the maturity, fullness of development, and successful bearing of fruits characteristic of autumn, combined with the virtuous excellence, moral perfection, and refined achievement that comes only with time and careful cultivation (all qualities traditionally associated with the rooster, particularly the mature rooster whose crow announces mastery and completion).

This symbolic fusion creates a powerful image of perfect balance and complete fulfillment, suggesting a state where the vigorous creative potential of spring and the realized achievements of autumn exist simultaneously, where youthful vitality and mature wisdom complement rather than contradict each other. The blue rooster thus becomes an emblem of ideal completion, representing not merely one phase of development but the harmonious integration of all phases, the successful navigation of the entire cycle from beginning to fruition. Such multi-layered symbolism demonstrates the sophisticated nature of traditional East Asian symbolic systems, where colors, animals, directions, seasons, and philosophical concepts interweave to create meanings far richer and more nuanced than any single element could convey independently. The blue rooster stands as a testament to this symbolic richness, embodying in a single compact image a complex philosophy of balance, completion, and the harmonious union of complementary opposites that is observable in part in both Daoist and broader East Asian thought; however, this notion is most directly pronounced in Daesoon Thought.

Conclusion

As a whole, when examined comprehensively and appreciated in its full complexity, the Blue Rooster Pagoda can be observed to exalt and honor many essential facets of the traditional and orthodoxical cosmology of Chinese Natural Philosophy, drawing upon centuries of accumulated wisdom and symbolic frameworks that have structured East Asian understanding of the cosmos and humanity's place within it. The pagoda's elaborate symbolic program incorporates numerous classical cosmological systems including the eight trigrams of the *Book of Changes*, which provide a fundamental framework for understanding the dynamic interplay of yin and yang forces throughout all phenomena. Additionally, the structure honors the four symbolic celestial animals that guard the cardinal directions and maintain cosmic order, the twelve deities of the Chinese Zodiac who preside over the cycle of years and embody distinct character types and energies, the twenty-four deities who are traditionally understood to be in charge of the seasonal divisions that structure agricultural and ritual calendars throughout East Asia, and the twenty-eight deities who maintain jurisdiction over the constellations that track the moon's passage through the heavens and provide celestial guidance for timing earthly activities.

This comprehensive incorporation of traditional cosmological frameworks demonstrates that Daesoon Jinrihoe, despite being classified as a new religious movement, maintains deep respect for and continuity with the inherited wisdom of East Asian religious and philosophical traditions. The pagoda serves as a visual testament to this continuity, embedding innovative Daesoon theological concepts within familiar cosmological structures that would be recognizable to anyone educated in traditional East Asian thought. This strategic combination of traditional and novel elements allows the pagoda to speak simultaneously to those versed in classical cosmology and to those seeking new religious insights and salvific hope.

Even Daesoon Jinrihoe's conception of the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven, subtly alluded to by the pagoda's distinctive finial crowning its uppermost point, corresponds in many respects to a traditional Daoist deity found in classical Chinese religious cosmology, specifically the Celestial Worthy of the Ninth Heaven, Performer of Universal Creation through His Thunderbolt, and the Originator with Whom All Beings Resonate, a deity depicted in *The Scripture of the Jade Pivot*. In Daesoon Jinrihoe's distinctive theological framework, the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven is understood and proclaimed to have descended from the heavens and taken human form as Kang Jeungsan, the religion's central divine figure, in order to salvifically conduct the monumental Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth (天地公事 *Kr cheonji gongsa*). These cosmic restructuring activities, performed by Kang Jeungsan during his earthly ministry, were necessary to resolve the accumulated grievances and imbalances that had developed throughout human history and to ensure the coming of the earthly paradise known as the Later World, a transformed era of universal peace, abundance, and spiritual fulfillment.

While the Blue Rooster Pagoda thus incorporates and honors numerous traditional cosmological elements, it simultaneously introduces novel symbols and innovative imagery that specifically express Daesoon Jinrihoe's unique theological vision and eschatological hopes. These novel symbols, which distinguish the pagoda from purely traditional Buddhist or Daoist stupas, include the poignant and emotionally powerful image of denizens representing the three realms of desire, form, and formlessness pleading desperately for divine intervention to alleviate their sufferings and resolve the cosmic disorders that plague existence. This imagery powerfully conveys the urgent need for salvific action that motivated the Supreme God's incarnation as Kang Jeungsan.

Additionally, the pagoda features innovative Ox-Seeking Pictures that creatively adapt and transform the classical Zen Buddhist ten ox-herding pictures by depicting scenes of the Earthly Paradise of the Later World rather than following the traditional Buddhist progression toward personal enlightenment and return to ordinary life. These modified ox-herding images shift the focus from individual spiritual cultivation to collective cosmic transformation, from personal liberation to universal salvation, reflecting Daesoon Jinrihoe's emphasis on the coming transformation of the entire world rather than merely the enlightenment of individual practitioners.

Most prominently and symbolically central to the entire structure stands the Blue Rooster itself, the pagoda's namesake image, which occupies a position of honor and stands perpetually ready and alert to crow triumphantly at the first dawn of the Later World when the long-awaited Earthly Paradise finally manifests and successfully marries together the excellent and complementary qualities of spring and autumn which combines the vital energy, renewal, and flourishing growth characteristic of spring with the maturity, fulfillment, and perfected achievement characteristic of autumn. This blue rooster serves as both herald and symbol of the transformed age, standing watch at the threshold between the present world of suffering and conflict and the future world of harmony and abundance, ready to announce through its clarion call that the cosmic transformation has been accomplished and humanity may enter into the paradise that Kang Jeungsan's Reordering Works have prepared.

Conflict of Interest

Jason Greenberger has been Managing Editor since July 2021 but had no role in the decision to publish this article. No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

Notes

[1] Words glossed in non-English languages throughout this article will be indicated via abbreviation as follows to avoid confusion: *Kr* = Korean, *Chn* = Chinese, *Skt* = Sanskrit.

[2] Incomplete and non-restored stupas remnants such as base layers have not been included for consideration. Naturally, their inclusion would push the dates back even further.

[3] *Goem* is a pure Korean word which is the nominalized form of the verb *goeda* (괴다) meaning 'to support.' That is why no Chinese character was provided.

[4] Taeng (탱) can also be written as 幀 when represented as a Chinese character. It means a relief (or engraved image) of a 'buddha', 'bodhisattva', or 'sage'.

[5] In terms of a specific example, this is quite similar to the Image of Perplexity Arising While Gazing at the Sky (觀天起疑相 *Kr* gwancheon giui-sang) from Won Buddhism's Ten Images from the Life of the Founding Master (大宗師十相 *Kr* daejongsa shibsang).

[6] Entry 'Seasonal Divisions (jeolhu)' from a draft version of the yet-to-be-published expanded edition of the 'Literary Companion Dictionary for *The Canonical Scripture*' produced by the Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture.

[7] Yin lines (陰爻) could be indicated via the number six. For example, the broken yin lines and the solid yang lines of the hexagram (蒙 *Chn* méng, 'enveloping') would be indicated from bottom to top as "Initial- 6, second- 9, third- 6, fourth- 6, fifth- 6, and top- 9 (初六、九二、六三、六四、六五、 上九)."

[8] As established by the *Qieyun* 《切韻》 Chinese rhyme dictionary which dates back to 601 CE.

[9] 《楚辭・天問》: "圜則九重, 孰營度之?"

[10] Ellipses indicate additional lines omitted due to length and limited relevance to the main point (the Ninth Heaven).

[11] 青, 生也, 象物生時色也。

[12] In the zodiac, it is represented through the Chinese character 酉 (*Chn* yǒu, *Kr* yu).

[13] 首戴冠者，文也，足搏距者，武也，敵在前敢鬥者、勇也，得食相告，仁也，守夜不失時， 信也。雞有此五德，君猶日淪而食之者，何也？

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Re-creation of Goguryeo Tomb Arts: *Sashindo* (Four Deities Pictures) in Daesoon Jinrihoe

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Abstract

Religious art symbolically expresses the belief and worldview of the religion through the cultural tradition. Daesoon Jinrihoe, a Korean native religion that was born in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, contains Korean traditions which appear through the thoughts, rituals, and temple architecture and arts. Among them, the *Sashindo* or the Four Deities Pictures in Yeoju Headquarters temple show a creative inheritance of the ancient tomb mural art, *Sashindo*, of the Goguryeo dynasty (BCE 37—CE 668) of Korea.

There are two distinct versions of the *Sashindo* in Daesoon Jinrihoe Yeoju Headquarters temple. One is a relief engraved in Cheonggye-top Tower, which shows the Four Deities as part of the cosmic structure of the Three Realms of heaven, earth, and humanity. The other is a set of four colored mural paintings inside Jeonggak-won building, in which one can see the detailed expressions of the mystical animal deities painted in vivid colors. Like Goguryeo *Sashindo*, Cheonggye-top Tower's *Sashindo* pictures symbolize the astronomical four-way system and the principle of Yin and Yang and Five Elements.

But it also represents the *Shindo* (Divine way) system of Daesoon Jinrihoe. *Shindo* is the divine principle of operating the Three Realms. Daesoon Jinrihoe's *Sashindo* pictures inherited the religious tradition of Goguryeo. At the same time, it reveals their unique aspects in their symbolic meanings and expressions. It would be meaningful to find an ancient Korean traditional culture re-created in a Korean new religion in modern times.

Keywords: Goguryeo *Sashindo*; Four Deities Pictures; Shindo; four directions; four seasons; religious culture; Shindo

Introduction

The *Sashindo* (四神圖, *Kr.* 사신도) or Four Deities Pictures of four mysterious animal gods: Cheongryong (blue dragon), Baekho (white tiger), Jujak (red bird), and Hyeonmu (black tortoise) represent the four ways: four directions and four seasons. The *Sashindo* as tomb art is related to East Asian astronomy and the concept of Yin and Yang and Five Elements. The pictures were originally found in ancient Korean religious culture expressed in tomb arts during the Goguryeo dynasty when the national culture developed through active interconnections with neighboring countries like China and countries in Eurasian continent.

When Buddhism became a national religion in Goguryeo Dynasty, such religious culture formed in underground tombs disappeared and many of the tomb murals began to appear in the Buddhist temples in different ways. Today, some images of Goguryeo *Sashindo* can be found in Gyeongbokgung Palace as the gods in stone statues who protect the palace at four directions, in Dancheong (colored paintings) of Buddhist temples, and some design characters in modern arts or commodities.

The pictures are also found in the temples of a Korean new religion, Daesoon Jinrihoe. Among the many of Korean native and new religions that emerged during the early 20th century, Daesoon Jinrihoe, which originated from Kang Jeungsan's religious works, may be said to be outstanding with regard to having Korean traditional culture in tangible cultural assets.

Especially, the temple arts show its religious doctrine expressed in various Korean traditional arts that can be characterized as Daoistic, Buddhist, and Confucian style. The *Sashindo* can be characterized as Daoistic, but it originally represents the ancient Korean *Shindo* (divine way) or *Shingyo* (divine teaching), a religious practice and culture formed in ancient times before a systematic religion like Buddhism appeared. One of the main characteristics of Daesoon Jinrihoe is the creative integration of traditional religions: *Seon* (regarded as similar to Daoism), Buddhism, and Confucianism. Such harmonious characteristics can be seen in the ideas and culture of *Shindo* of Daesoon Jinrihoe(Ko 2016, 163). *Sashindo* can be one of tangible cultural assets of the order, which shows such harmonious characteristics of *Shindo*.

Previous studies on *Sashindo* include not only artistic studies, but also studies focusing on its astronomical, historical, and religious background (Kim 2019). This article would be meaningful as it tries to find out how Goguryeo's representative tomb art, *Sashindo* is inherited and re-created as a culture of Korean new religion in modern times.

History of *Sashindo*

Sashindo paintings are only found in Korea, China, and Japan, and can be seen as a unique cultural style of ancient Northeast Asia. In China, it appeared throughout the Han

and Tang periods (approximately 2nd century BCE–6th century CE). In Korea, they developed during the Goguryeo Dynasty in the 5th to 7th centuries. Goguryeo's *Sashindo* style was spread to Baekje (one of the Three States of Korea) and Japan. (Park 1992,765; Jeon 2000, 342–361)

Historically, in the prehistoric era, before the *Sashindo*, there was the *Ishindo* (二神圖, Two Deities Pictures), which consists of Cheongryong (blue dragon) and Baekho (white tiger). They were first found in the Neolithic tomb, the 45th tomb in Xishuipo, Puyang City, Henan Province. Later, the images of the blue dragon and the white tiger appeared in the tomb of Emperor Eul of the Qin Dynasty in the Warring States period (770–403 BCE) along with the names of twenty-eight constellations, indicating that the pictures are related to astronomy. *Ishindo* developed into *Sashindo* (Four Deities Pictures) with Joojak (red bird) and Hyeonmu (black tortoise) added during the Warring States period.

The appearance of all four deities, Cheongryong, Baekho, Jujak, and Hyeonmu, is found in tile relics of the Han Dynasty (202 BCE–8 CE). (Kim 2007, 154–155) In literatures, although the writings about the meanings of Four Deities do not exactly correspond to the times of the relics found, it is shown that that iconography and the meanings of the Four Deities were formed over a long period along with the development of astronomical theory since the animals indicating the four gods have been changed in different literatures of different times.

From the records in literature, *Master Lü's Spring and Autumn Annals*(呂氏春秋) around 239 BCE, the four animal gods are described as a blue dragon, a white horse, a red horse, and a black horse. In *the Book of Rites*(禮記) during the early Han period, they are described as Saryeong(四靈, four spirits) of dragon, phoenix, giraffe, and turtle. In *Huainanzi*(淮南子) during the Han dynasty, a form of five animal gods was prepared by adding a yellow dragon in the center based on the astronomical system and the principle of Yin and Yang and Five Elements. It wasn't until *Records of the Grand Historian*(史記) around 109–91 BCE that it showed a perspective explaining the four animal gods related to the twenty-eight constellations.

In the Later Han period, the four deities became widely known as an astronomical idea. In general, Four Deities refer to the four animal gods in the four directions (Kim 2007, 153–186). In this way, a previous version of ancient tomb mural style called "the *Sashindo* or Four Deities Pictures" was developed in relation to relics and literature.

Since ancient tombs are spaces for the dead, murals of ancient tombs are decorated in funeral arts in religious styles that reflect the view of a life after death. Mural paintings of ancient Goguryeo are usually divided into three stages. Each stage shows a different theme. The 1st period (4th– 5th centuries CE) murals depict person characters and living customs. The 2nd period (mid 5th to mid 6th centuries) murals are drawn on the themes of living customs, decorative patterns, and Four Deties. And the 3rd period (mid-6th to 7th centuries) murals mainly depict the theme of the Four Deities.

The fact that, in the late third period, the Four Deities became a major theme and the

Sashindo become *Oshindo* (Five Deities Pictures), in which a yellow dragon is added in the center to the Four Deities (Kim 2018, 90) shows the development of astronomy and the five elements of yin and yang, as well as the tendency to idealize religious thinking accordingly. Since Hwangryong (yellow dragon) symbolizes the cosmic center or the king in charge of the four directions, it is believed that it represents the space view centered on the Goguryeo dynasty, which dominated the hegemony of Northeast Asia at the time.

The Four Deities are also known for guiding the souls of the dead by specifying the burial directions according to feng shui geography (Kang 2006, 162–164). Gwak Park (郭璞, 276–324)'s *Sasepyeon*(四勢編) describes burial methods as the following.

> For the burial method, a blue dragon is placed on the left, a white tiger on the right, a red bird in the front, and a black tortoise in the back. The blue dragon's body should be expressed as it moves in a winding motion, the white tiger to curl up as if roaring, the red bird to spread its wings wide as if dancing, and the black tortoise to raise its head. If the space situation is the other way around, it will break down the burial space for the dead. (Kim 2007, 188)

As mentioned before, *Sashindo* arts are only found in Korea, China, and Japan, as a unique cultural style of ancient Northeast Asia. They first appeared in China, and then, developed in a distinctive style in Goguryeo of Korea. Among the three nations, it is generally mentioned that Goguryeo of Korea shows the most sophisticated development of *Sashindo* mural paintings.

Chinese *Sashindo* of the Han-Tang period emphasized the function of decoration and chasing out evil spirits. It contrasts with Goguryeo *Sashindo*, which is drawn in four directions following a systematic astronomical structure. (Kim 2000, 16) In addition, the Sashinchong Tomb (Four Deities Tomb), which is made up only of the Four Deities is a unique style of Goguryeo *Sashindo* that cannot be found in China. Also, the expression of the Four Deities of Goguryeo shows an original aspect. For example, the Jujak (red phoenix) of Goguryeo *Sashindo* is characterized by its wide-open wing shape, three tails expressed like fish fins, and a head like a chicken. In contrast, the bird of the Chinese *Sashindo* is sometimes expressed like a natural animal bird with folded wings. In the case of the Hyeonmu (black tortoise), the expression of the two tails of turtles meeting each other in an X shape is not found in Chinese *Sashindo*. (Min 2015, 429; Jeon 2000, 326; Kim Jin-Soon 2009, 35)

While *Sashindo* in China declined from the Tang dynasty, Goguryeo's *Sashindo* was inherited by Baekje and Japan in the same style, highlighting their independent position. (Park 2003, 139–177, 140–141, 167) Baekje's Songsan-ri tomb and Japan's Takamatsu-chong tomb murals are seen as an extension of the Goguryeo tomb murals. (Park 1992, 765)

Although the *Sashindo*, as an ancient tomb mural art, disappeared, its signs of the four directions related to the Yin and Yang and Five Elements and their function as the

four guardian deities have been inherited in various cultures afterwards. Individual drawings were used as defense markers of four directions and as pictorial themes for arts in later dynasties, Goryeo and Joseon. For example, the armies in the four directions surrounding and protecting the center area of Korea had flags with the colored drawings of animal deities to indicate their directions in charge. And the four animal gods of the *Sashindo* remain as stone statues, which guard the four gates of Gyeongbokgung Palace. Individual drawings were used for decorations of roof tiles and found in Buddhist temples' Dancheong wall painting. Recently, they have been used as Korean traditional characters or subjects in artistic paintings and commercial designs.

Symbolic Meanigs of *Sashindo*

Cosmic Four-Way

The four gods of Cheongryong, Baekho, Jujak, and Hyeonmu in Goguryeo tombs are the main members who symbolize the celestial four-way cosmology. (Kim 2007, 160) They become the gods in charge of the four directions of east, west, north, and south, and the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter.

The concept of cosmic four-way originated from the four cosmic pillars of the summer solstice, the winter solstice, the spring equinox, and the autumn equinox in relation to the movement of the sun. The opposite movement between yin and yang of the winter solstice and the summer solstice changes all things through a mutual sympathetic movement through the spring and the autumn equinox. (Park 1990, 97)

According to Lee Seong-Gu, the prototype of Jujak (red phoenix) and Hyeonmu (black tortoise) are bird and fish, which symbolize the balance of the binary world of yin and yang, sun and moon, earth and underground, etc. (Lee 2001, 1) In this sense, the four-way concept reflects a cyclical view of the universe that expresses the eternal cycle and regeneration of the universe that occurs in the intersection of yin and yang.

The concept of four-way, which represents cosmic creation and circulation, can be found in the West and the East. In the West, the four elements (water, fire, earth, and air) were regarded as the origins of the universe in ancient Greece. Also, it is claimed by some studies that the Christian symbol, the 'cross-shaped figure', contains the concept of the cosmic four-way. Jeon Kwang-Sik introduced various cross patterns of different cultures and examined the artistic and philosophical meaning of the symbol, explaining that the most important symbol of the cross in ancient society is the cosmic and global order, which is the four seasons and the four directions. (Jeon 1993, 54)

In East Asia, the four-way concept is very strong, and it is regarded as the original principle for the creation of the universe and all beings. In Confucianism, the cosmic principle of four-way, Won(元, begining), Hyeong(亨, growth), Ii(利, maturity), and Jeong(貞, completion) corresponds to the four seasons of spring, summer, autumn, and winter, and the four virtues of In(仁, benevolence), Eui(義, righteousness), Ye(禮,

propriety), and Ji(智, wisdom). In a timely sense, the four seasons constitute a year and 12 months of the earth. Furthermore, all things are born, grow, and mature through the changes of the four seasons. In this way, the four directions and the four seasons become the principles of cosmic circulation and regeneration. Referring to these ideas, it can be guessed that the *Sashindo* is an important example that contains a cosmological and universal four-way symbol in East Asia.

Astronomical View of the Ancient Times

Mircea Eliade said that one of the spiritual characteristics of ancient people is to see reality as an imitation of a celestial prototype. In other words, the reality is acquired by placing an object in a place corresponding to the constellation system. In this sense, ancient architectural behavior was an imitation of the 'celestial prototype'. (Eliade 1976, 17) Goguryeo tombs with Four Deities mural paintings often assume a sky space in the form of a dome with sky constellations drawn there. This shows an architectural style that imitates celestical space.

The *Sashindo*, as a symbolic representation of the four-way astronomical system, reflected astronomical ideas that can be traced back to prehistoric times. It is a characteristic of ancient Korean astronomical thoughts. The evidences are found in numerous dolmens in Korea, which have constellation drawings engraved on them. The petroglyphs show the constellations near the North Star in a form that is inverted from the actual sky. (Park 2007, 26) The dolmens were used as altars for rituals. Dolmens with constellations are usually found in mountains near rivers or seas. It shows that dolmens were used as altars for rituals to pray for abundant fishing and agriculture. (Kim 2018, 50) In addition, the astronomical thought of *Sashindo* can be found in Yutnori, a Korean traditional game.[2] Kim Il-Gwon saw that Yutnori is a symbol of the four directions of the Big Dipper and the constellation movement in the four seasons. (Kim 2018, 35–36, 44–45)

The prehistoric Korean traditional astronomy feature was inherited by Goguryeo during the Three States Era. It made the so-called Age of Mural Astronomy. (Kim 2018, 85) *Sashindo* is the one that expresses the Mural Astronomy of Goguryeo culture.

The four gods of Cheongryong, Baekho, Jujak, and Hyeonmu in Goguryeo tombs represent a cosmic four-way axis to form an astronomical system with seven stars of the north (Big Dipper) and 28 constellations, which are formed by the four groups of seven stars in the four directions. The four animal deities are usually painted together with four groups of Big Dipper stars and sometimes with unique drawings such as the Twin Three stars, a three-legged bird, and a toad or rabbit, which also represent certain cosmic directions. (Kim 1996, 3–4)

"Cheongryong (blue dragon)" is a deity who protects the seven stars of the East among the 28 constellation stars, symbolizing spring in the season and the energy of the wood in the Five Elements, and expressing it in blue. "Baekho (white tiger) " protects

the seven stars of the West, symbolizing the autumn season, energy of gold, and expresses it in white. "Jujak (red phoenix)" is a god in charge of the Southern seven stars, which symbolize summer and the energy of fire, and expresses it in red. "Hyeonmu (black tortoise)" protects the Northern seven stars, symbolizing winter and water energy, and expresses it in black. (Jeon and Eo, 1998, 97–101)

As the Four Deities became the main theme of the ancient Goguryeo murals in later generations, unique mural styles, such as in the Sashinchong (Four Deities Tomb), were created. Here, the four-way astronomical view appears in the spatial structure of the tombs, where a dome-shaped ceiling symbolizes the sky and four-sided walls indicate the four directions. (Kim, Il-Gwon 1996, 23)

Thought of Yin and Yang and Five Elements

In around the 5th century, when Goguryeo's national power strengthened, the *Sashindo* developed in the form of *Oshindo* (Five Deities Pictures), in which a yellow dragon was added to the center. The yellow dragon symbolizes the king or the center of the world. The development from *Sashindo* (Four Deities Pictures) into *Oshindo* (Five Deities Pictures) shows that the cosmic four-way idea expands into five-way with the establishment of the thought of Yin and Yang and Five Elements.

The thought developed together when the concept of astronomy was systematized during the Spring and Autumn Warring States Period. Yin and Yang are concepts related to the movement of the Sun and Moon and the change of sunlight and seasons. It became the basis of the Iching (易) theory. The five elements originate from the five planets: Mokseong (木星, wood planet, Jupiter), Hwaseong (火星, fire planet, Mars), Toseong (土星, earth planet, Saturn), Geumseong (金星, gold planet, Venus), and Suseong (水星, water planet, Mercury) based on astronomical observation.

The Five Elements that make up all things are: wood, fire, earth, gold, and water, and explain the relationship in which all things interact through mutual beneficence and conflict. They are closely connected with the concept of the four elements in that they serve as the theoretical basis for explaining the four-way position on the ground and the cyclical order of four-season changes.

Gangseo-daemyo Tomb is an example of the later murals of Goguryeo *Sashindo* that emphasize the five-way system. It has a drawing of Hwangryong (yellow dragon) in the center of the ceiling in addition to four deities on the four sides.

The five-way idea based on Yin and Yang and Five Elements contained in Gogugyeo *Sashindo* also appears in politics and society at the time in various ways in Korean architecture and arts. During the Joseon dynasty, the Dongdaemun gate in the east, Seodaemun gate in the west, Namaemun gate in the south, and Bukdaemun gate in the north were installed around Hanyang capital city. The four gates were to protect the capital center from the four directions.

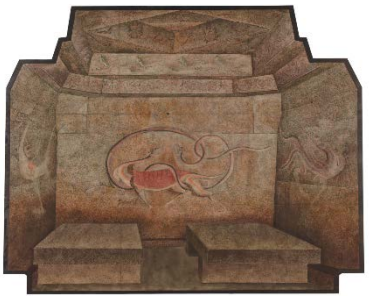


Figure 1. Gangseodaemyo Tomb, 7C
(NRICH 2018, 33)



Figure 2. Gangseodaemyo Tomb, 7C
(NRICH 2006, 45)

The five-way idea is also shown in some discussions of ethical virtues. The previous Four Virtues of Confuciansm by Mencius—In (仁, benevolence), Eui (義, righteousness), Ye (禮, propriety), Ji (智, wisdom), which corresponds to four directions and four seasons, expands into Five Virtues with the virtue of Shin (信, faithfulness) added by Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒, 179–104 BCE). They are also applied to five emotions, organs, tastes, and colors, and their relations, which have two opposite movements of mutual conflict and mutual benefit, are used to explain many aspects of human life, such as health, relationships, ethics, etc.

Cultural Value of *Sashindo*

The Goguryeo dynasty holds a special significance in Korean history and culture. As the most powerful nation in Korean history, it once claimed hegemony over the East Asian continent. It developed an international and multicultural civilization by encompassing and interacting with various ethnic groups. It is also said that Goguryeo inherited its history and culture from its predecessor, Gojoseon (2300th BCE), the first Korean nation, and Balhae, an ancient dynasty established after Gojoseon.

Goguryeo's culture and ethnicity are characterized by its independent identity, strong spirit, grandeur and international culture. It is known that the Goguryeo people were good at dancing and singing, and faithful in worshipping the sky. Studies on Goguryeo ancient tombs and murals started during the Japanese colonization era. In the 1990s, the studies became active, especially by Korean researchers, after a diplomatic relationship was established between Korea and China. Then, various studies were published afterwards. The Gogureyo murals occupy a special place in East Asian ancient tomb art as they show how they creatively digested a new culture from outside and developed it on its cultural foundation. (Kim 2007, 173)

The mural paintings of Goguryeo tombs have been selected as one of the top 100 national cultural symbols of Korea by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.[3] The various materials and paintings of the murals reflect the religious rituals of Seon, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism in ancient Korea and their historical life. They are

recognized as heritage that preserves the original Korean culture. At the opening ceremony of the 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Olympics, several Goguryeo cultures were introduced, including *Sashindo*, Muyongchong tomb murals that depicted dancing girls, Inmyeonjo (a human-faced bird), and Cheonsang-bunya-yeolcha (a celestial map of Heaven) developed in Goguryeo astronomy. As such, it can be said that the murals of Goguryeo have an important position as the prototype of Korean culture.

In particular, *Sashindo* may be the highlight of Goguryeo's tomb murals, and it is the main icon of the four-way astronomical system in the tomb murals that reflect Korea's traditional view of astronomy. Individual drawings of *Sashindo* accepted the styles of the Han Dynasty, but they created Goguryeo's style of the Four Deities by creatively accepting different cultures, such as Erasian nations, when interacting with countries in the north and west regions. Its original composition and sophisticated expression show Goguryeo's cultural excellence.

Today, *Sashindo* images are being reinterpreted in the field of painting arts and design as Korean cultural content. Representatively, in the 1980s, painter Baek Sun-nam was recognized worldwide by publishing seveal works that focused on Goguryeo *Sashindo* as a prototype of the Korean character. (Chae 2019, 563–564) In the 2000s, painter Jo Bong-Seok modernized the *Sashindo* and reflected the spirit of Goguryeo in his works (Lee 1987, 6). Shin Yun-Ho (2010) presented various prospects for the use of Goguryeo *Sashindo* in folk paintings, calligraphy, and Chinese character arts.

Sashindo in Daesoon Jinrihoe Yeoju Headquarters Temple

Concerning religions of today, the Sashindo arts are found in the temple of a Korean new religion, Daesoon Jinrihoe. The order developed based on the teachings and works of Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909) and Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958), and was established by Park Wudang (1917–1996) as a religious foundation in 1969. Since Daesoon Jinrihoe's *Sashindo* arts symbolize cosmology based on Korean traditional astronomy and the idea of Yin and Yang and Five Elements, it can be said that Daesoon *Sashindo* inherits the spiritual and cultural prototype of the Goguryeo *Sashindo* more genuinely. In addition, it is worth paying attention to the fact that it is not a simple imitation, but it features creative aspects.

Background Thoughts

Daesoon Jinrihoe is the largest group among various new religions following Kang Jeungsan, who was active in the late 19th and early 20th century. Jeungsan's religious ideology was carried out by his work 'Cheonji-gongsa (Reordering Works of Universe)'. Cheonji-gongsa is one of the unique features of Jeungsan religions. It is a cosmic work that Kang, as the incarnation of Sangje (God) or Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven, performed to fix the Three Realms of heaven, earth, and humanity, and to save the world

that is dominated by mutual conflict and open a peaceful world of mutual beneficence. However, the Cheonji-gongsa is explained in the broad thinking of Jeungsan, who understood all existing religious laws, such as Seon, Buddhism, and Confucianism. This attitude can be confirmed through the following passage of the *Jeon-gyeong* scripture of Daesoon Jinrihoe.

> All ethnic groups in the world have established their indigenous cultures on the basis of their unique forms of thought derived from living traditions, but when these cultures spread beyond internal usage, great conflicts occurred. Therefore, Sangje has now made the foundation of a civilization which will be achieved in the Later World by absorbing the essence of each culture. (*Dharma* 3:23)

> In the past, the ground was small and affairs were simple, so it was possible to clear confusion away with just one method. However, today, as the improved contact between the East and the West has broadened the ground and complicated the affairs, it is not possible to redress chaos unless all methods are integrated and used. (*Prophetic Elucidations* 73)

In the above, we can see that Jeungsan takes the essence of all ideas of previous traditions formed in different cultures according to their living conditions. And he would use all methods that have existed and been used for the development of human civilization. However, the way Jeungsan integrates their essences for Cheonji-gongsa can be explained by the principles of 'Wonsi-banbon (原始返本, go back to the origin and restore the root)' and '*Shindo* (divine way).'

Wonsi-banbon is not just to return to the beginning in time, but it means that everything is found of its root and everything of all Three Realms will be opened into a new level by Cheonji-gongsa performed by Kang Jeungsan as Sangje. (Cha 2017, 194) It is like arriving at the starting point of a circle after going all the way through the circle, so the beginning point would be different in a whole new way, containing everything that humans have been through. In this view, *Sashindo*, as a religious art, can be seen as a cultural restoration, to be reminded of the Korean religious spirit and thought.

Shindo (神道, divine way) means a way of divine beings and divine law by which all matters and affairs unfold. The *Shindo* is not a new concept. *Shindo* or *Shingyo* (divine teachings or divine religion) is known as the first religious practice in ancient Korea when the national leaders made decisions by reading the way of divine beings and keeping faith in God and gods by performing rituals. But in Daesoon thought, it is added with a new way for divine beings because Jeungsan's Cheonji-gongsa rectified and reorganized all *Shindo* system.

In Daesoon, *Shindo* indicates the way of divine beings of heaven and earth, which operates by the Dosu (cosmic program) set by Cheonji-gongsa. Divine beings manifest Sangje's Cheonji-gonsa in all aspects of the world, as they are in charge of operating natural phenomena and of guiding and helping human affairs. The Four Deties in charge

of the four directions and four seasons are one of thousands of divine beings enshrined in 15 divine altars of Yeongdae shrine of the temples.

According to Eliade, religious architecture is a representation of the celestial dome and is thus a sacred space at the center of the world. And what humans do in this space becomes a sacred activity that seeks to conform to the truth of God and heaven. Each ethnic group and religious culture have a different understanding of the truth of God and heaven. Such variety of worldviews are reflected in the religious building. In such a manner, all the pictorial subjects and expressions of Daesoon Jinrihoe temple arts are the symbolic representations of its religious ideas.

From this view, it can be said that *Wonsi-banbon* and *Shindo*, as the representative ideas of describing how the divine way works, are not only found in the text materials of Daesoon thoughts, but they are also found in the rituals, temple structures, and decorations. The temple art also shows the characteristics of Korean tradition, where three religious traditions of Seon (later regarded as similar to Daoism), Buddhism, and Confucianism are harmonized. And Sashindo pictures mainly show Seon or Daoistic characteristics that inherited the tradition from Goguryeo *Sashindo*.

There are two versions of *Sashindo* in Yeoju Headquarters, one engraved in Cheonggye-top tower and the other as colored paintings in Jeonggak-won building. The Four Deities embrace the Goguryeo style while revealing their unique aspects in their symbolic meaning and expression.

Sashindo of Cheong-gye Top Tower

The Daesoon cosmology of the Three Realms of heaven, earth, and humanity, which is operated by divine beings with the principle of *Shindo* under Sangje's order, is beautifully expressed in the Cheonggye-top tower. The tower was built in 1987 to commemorate the completion of the Yeoju headquarters temple in 1986. The tower is placed along with a stone folding screen, which has engraved writings of Kang Jeungsan's teachings.

Cheonggye-top tower is a 10-story pagoda with a height of 1,350 cm. Like the Buddhist tower structure, it consists of three parts: upper part, pagoda body, and stylobate. The upper part of nine round layers symbolizes the Ninth Heaven, where Sangje presides over the universe. In the body, the seven layers of four-sided faces symbolize 28 constellations, and the three layers of eight-sided faces symbolize 24 seasons. Each face has an engraving of the divine being in charge. The lower stylobate has three layers: upper layer represents 12 directions and 12 seasons and their divine beings. The mid layer is where the Four Deities are engraved as the divine beings in charge of 4 directions and 4 seasons.

The biggest feature of Cheonggye-top tower is that it represents the universe made up of the Three Realms (Samgye) of heaven, earth, and humanity. In general, the Three Realm are known as Samgye (三界) or Samje (三才) in Korean tradition. Although the

meanings of the term differ in different thoughts, Samegye of Daesoon seems to emphasize more of a universe in which the three domains of existence act in close relations to one another.

Through the process of opening up a new heaven and earth according to Jeungsan's Cheonji-gongsa, the Three Realms, which were dominated by confrontation and conflict, will transform into the worlds of Sangsaeng (mutual beneficence) and harmony. And here, humans play an independent role in realizing the ideal world.

The Cheonggye-top tower symbolizes the universe operated by the harmonious work by 'Shindo', the divine system centered on Sangje God. The harmony between divine world and human world is crucial for the realization of Shindo in the world and the opening of an earthly paradise of peace and harmony.



Figure 3. Cheonggye-top Tower, Yeoju Headquarters Temple



Figure 4. Sashindo of Cheonggye-top Tower

The *Sashindo* is on the second layer of the stylobate. However, in the folding screen, it indicates *Sashindo* as the name 'Hyeonmudo' (black tortoise picture). The reason why it was named Hyeonmudo is described in *Daesoon Guideline (*DIRC 2020b, 21*)*, "Since the principle of heaven and earth was based on 1·6 water." The 1·6 water indicates one of the four energies assigned to the four directions according to the principle of *the Book of Change*. From the phrase, it can be understood that the northern Hyeonmu, which symbolizes the energy of water, is the most fundamental and representative one among the other three directions.

In East Asian astronomy, the north is home to the north pole, the center of the universe. So the northern direction has a sacred meaning. This can explain why, in Buddhist temples, the main sanctuary building is located in the north. In the same way, Yeongdae, the most sacred and main building of Daesoon temple, is located in the north, which is in the innermost area that visitors will reach in their final step of the tour. Also, the water energy of the north has an important meaning. Water is the source of all things in their birth and growth. Jeungsan said that the earth's energy was exhausted of water energy. And said that there will be a sound like an earthquake in the future when the

water energy begins to circulate to let the earth energy. (*Reordering Works* 3: 20–21; *Prophetic Elucidations* 51)

The Cheonggye-top tower's Sashindo seems to be almost identical to the actual directions. The tower stands in the same direction as Yeongdae to the north. In this position, Hyeonmu points to the north, Cheongryong to the east, Baekho to the west, and Jujak to the south.

The layer of *Sashindo* is located right above the layer of Ox-seeking pictures that represents the human world. It can be said that the four directions and four seasons are the most closely related divine system to humans. The four-way systems may be the most basic natural principles that humans perceive and should follow in their daily lives. So there is a saying in Korean tradition when indicating a morally mature person, "He or she has earned the seasonal energy." Similarly, there is a phrase in *Jeon-gyeong*.

> One day, Sangje said to His disciples, "People do not know what a precious incantation the *Verse of the Seasonal Divisions* is. There is a saying that the seasonal-subdivisions are called 'cheol' and that a child of indiscretion is called a cheol-buji (not knowing cheol). This means that a child with good sense is believed to know cheol no matter how young the child is, while an elderly person who is unsensible is said to act as a cheol-buji child, no matter how old that person is. (*Reordering Works* 3: 34)

In Daesoon thought, the Dao has the concept of time of one year and 12 months, and one year goes through changes in four seasons. In this context, the state of human perfection, "Unification with Dao", means that humans are in perfect tune with the seasonal energies and their changes.

If Goguryeo Sashindo emphasized the aspects of heaven as the center of the world, Cheonggye-top tower's *Sashindo* shows close interactions between the divine beings' four-way system and humans' endeavor to act according to the divine way. The expression of the Four Deities is also very similar to that of Goguryeo, and I would like to talk about the detailed expressions in Jeonggakwon's Sashindo, which will be discussed below.

Sashindo of Jeonggak-won Building

Jeonggak-won is the first building visible from the inside of Jeongnae, the innermost area of the Yeoju headquarters temple. Jeonggak-won is used as a place for followers to practice mantra reciting before ceremonies such as Gongbu (mantra reciting ritual) and Gangsik (gathering ceremony followed by Gongbu).

On the outer wall of Jeonggakwon, there are Sacheonwangdo pictures (Four Heavenly Kings pictures, which are traditionally found in Korean Buddhist temples in a gate before entering the innermost area of the temple). So, together with the Four Deities Pictures inside, the building itself seems to signify the importance of the four-way

principle. As the name of the building, 'Jeonggk (正覺)' means 'to be rightfully enlightened of Dao', those murals may be there to guide the practitioners of their way of cultivation. It can be said that while the Four Heavenly Kings in the outside murals protect the practitioners from four sides against evil energy or distracting thoughts, the *Sashindo* inside murals remind the practitioners about what it means to be rightfully minded or get enlightened by showing the natural principle of the four seasons and four directions.



Figure 5. Jeonggak-won Building

The pictures of the Four Deities in Jeonggak-won are large, painted in vivid colors, and the expressions are very unique. So the pictures would catch the eyes of the viewer when entering the second-floor room.

Here, I tried to look into *Sashindo* pictures in Jeonggakwon in comparison with those of Gogureyo *Sashindo* pictures found in Gangseo-daemyo tomb and Oh-hee-bun no. 4 tomb in the 7th century. The murals of the two tombs are known to show the most sophisticated styles among the *Sashindo* pictures of Goguryeo. But in the cases of Jujak (red phoenix in the south) and Hyeonmu (black tortoise in the north), the images are unclear due to their damaged shape, one might refer to the images of Jujak of the Ssanyongchong tomb and Hyeonmu of the Tongu Sashingchong tomb.

Gangseo-daemyo *Sashindo* is known as a masterpiece that shows the unique beauty of southern painting style (Jeon 2018, 136), while Oh-hee-bun No.4 tomb shows a strong and powerful touch influenced by the northern painting style. (Lim 2019) Tonggu Sashinchong tomb is known to express the Hyeonmu image most dynamically.

1) Cheongryong (blue dragon) and Baekho (white tiger)



Figure 6. Gangseo-daemyo tomb, Blue Dragon (7C, Pyeong-yang. NRICH 2018, 24)



Figure 7. Jeonggak-won, Blue Dragon (modern, Yeoju Headquarters)



Figure 8. Gangseo-daemyo Tomb, White Tiger (7C, Pyeong-yang. NRICH 2018, 38)



Figure 9. Jeonggak-won, White Tiger (Modern, Yeoju Headquarters)

There are certain rules regarding the positions and shapes of the deities. Blue dragon's body should be curved like wriggling, and white tiger's body should crouch as if it roars. Their heads positioned to the south (lower) and tails to the north (upper) direction are consistently expressed in Goguryeo *Sashindo*. It is said to be a generalized posture in the process of depicting twenty-eight constellations in the images of the Four Deities. (Kim 2007, 188–190)

In general, it is said that the blue dragon symbolizes an increase in Yang energy during the spring equinox, and the white tiger symbolizes the entering into Yin energy during the autumn equinox. It seems that the rise and fall of Yin and Yang energy appear more clearly in the pictures of Jeonggakwon. In addition, the colors are painted in vivid blue and white, clearly expressing the characteristics of the East and the West.

The trunks of the blue dragon and the white tiger are like snakes or dragons. Snake represents cosmic energy or the ever-changing and regenerating vitality. Dragon is known as the head of all animals and has scales on its body. It rises to the sky during the spring equinox and submerges during the autumn equinox. (Jeon and Eo 1998, 97–101)

The blue dragon and the white tiger in Jeonggak-won murals are very dynamic in their wiggling or crouching. The wiggling of the blue dragon is almost circular, which can be compared to the appearance of a yellow dragon drawn on the central ceiling of Gangseo-daemyo tomb and Oh-hee-bun no. 4 tomb murals.



Figure10. Gangseo-daemyo Tomb, Yellow Dragon (NRICH 2006, 45)

The clouds in the background create a mysterious heavenly atmosphere with patterns that appear a lot in the late Goguryeo *Sashindo*. Gangseo-daemyo *Sashindo* has no background pattern, while Oh-hee-bun No. 4 *Sashindo* has various lotus patterns. Lotus in Egyptian and Greek cultures and Buddhist culture symbolizes religious enlightenment (Park 1990, 47), showing a religious view that combines the influences of Western and Buddhist culture. In Jeonggak-won pictures, the clouds may do a similar function as the lotuses do.

2) Jujak (red phoenix) and Hyeonmu (black tortoise)

In Goguryeo's *Sashindo*, the Jujak is characterized by the head of a chicken, a tail like a fish fin, and wide wings. It differs from Chinese murals, where the phoenix is similar to a chicken with wings folded. The Jujak of Goguryeo looks as if it would fly with wings wide open. (Min 2015, 34, 429) Jeonggak-won's Jujak depicts such characteristics very similar to those of Goguryeo. However, it seems that the five colors of the bird, which symbolize the five virtues, are emphasized, and the feathers on the neck and tail are more splendidly expressed.



Figure 11. Gangseo-daemyo Tomb, Jujak
(7C, Pyeong-yang. NRICH 2018, 37)



Figure 12. Jeonggak-won, Jujak
(Modern, Yeoju Headquarters)

Black tortoise is a mystical animal that has both images of tortoise and snake. Hyeonmu of Jeonggak-won is similar to that of the Tonggu Sashinchong tomb, which is known to have the most dynamic expression of the black tortoise. The snake's body twisted like a Möbius band and wrapped around it on the right.



Figure 13. Gangseo-daemyo Tomb, Hyeonmu (7C, Pyeong-yang) (NRICH 2018, 32)



Figure 14. Jeonggak-won , Hyeonmu (modern, Yeoju Headquarters)

In this way, when looking at the specific expression style of Jeonggak-won *Sashindo* compared to the Goguryeo Sashindo, we can see that it creatively inherits the Goguryeo style. However, their meanings to viewers would be different. Goguryeo *Sashindo* was an underground tomb mural art that expressed the heavenly world through the Four Deities as images formed in accordance with the astronomical system. Their grandeur was to honor the tomb owner, probably loyal persons related to the dynasty, or to emphasize Goguryeo's national position as the center of the world. On the other hand, Daesoon Jinrihoe *Sashindo* is rather a way of teaching for the practitioners. The Four Deities in the murals are there maybe to remind and request their ethical and spiritual cultivation to be tuned into the Dao that appear as four seasons and four directions.

Conclusion

Religious art symbolically expresses the beliefs and worldview of the religion through the cultural traditional styles of each country. Daesoon Jinrihoe is a native Korean religion that originated from a historical figure, Kang Jeungsan, who was active in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Korean traditions appear through the doctrinal thoughts, rituals, and architectural style of the order. Among the material arts in the temple, the Sashindo shows how they creatively inherited the style of the ancient Goguryeo's representative tomb mural arts. The Four Deities are mysterious animal gods: Cheongryong (blue dragon), Baekho (white tiger), Jujak (red phoenix), and Hyeonmu (black tortoise), representing the four directions and four seasons.

There are two versions of Sashindo in the Yeoju headquarters temple. One is the relief structures of Cheonggye-top tower, and the other is the colored murals inside Jeonggak-won building. Through the overall composition and layout of the Cheonggy-top tower, the Four Deities as part of world view of Daesoon thought can be examined, and the murals of the Four Deities of Jeonggakwon can be examined in detail.

Just like Goguryeo Sashindo, Cheonggye-top Tower's Sashindo symbolizes the four energies of the astronomical four-way system. But in Daesoon, it is a part of the Shindo system (or divine world and its system) newly set by Kang Jeungsan's Cheonji-gongsa (Reordering of Universe). The Shindo, as the operating principle of the new Three

Realms of heaven, earth, and human, is based on the idea of Haewon-Sangsaneng (resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence). Shindo of Haewon-Sangsaeng is the principle of nature that humans must learn and follow to open a new world of peace and harmony.

The expressions of the Four Deities are also very similar to those of Goguryeo, and the detailed expressions are well represented in Jeonggak-won Sashindo murals. Jeonggak-won's Sashindo has a symbolic meaning, 'to be enlightened of Dao correctly' through the principle of the four-ways. When examining the specific expression style in comparison to the Gangseo-daemyo and Oh-hee-bun No. 4 tombs in the 6th century, it can be said that Daseoon Sashindo is not just an imitation of Goguryeo but shows an original aspect by highlighting the characteristics of each deity through different coloring and expressions uniquely and dynamically.

The Goguryeo Sashindo were to honor the tomb owner, probably loyal persons related to the dynasty, or to emphasize Goguryeo's national position as the center of the world. On the other hand, Daesoon Jinrihoe Sashindos is rather a way of teaching for the practitioners. The Four Deities in the murals are there maybe to remind and request their ethical and spiritual cultivation to be tuned into the Dao that appears as the four seasons and four directions.

In this way, Daesoon Sashindo creatively inherited the Goguryeo style in their unique religious meanings and expressions. It would be meaningful to find an ancient Korean religious culture in a new Korean religion of modern times.

Conflict of Interest

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

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BOOK REVIEW

Jacob P. Dalton, *Conjuring the Buddha: Ritual Manuals in Early Tantric Buddhism*

Carole M. CUSACK (University of Sydney)

https://doi.org/10.25050/JDTREA.2025.5.1.201

Jacob P. Dalton, *Conjuring the Buddha: Ritual Manuals in Early Tantric Buddhism*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2023, 344 pp. ISBN: 978-0-231-20583-2, $35.00 (pbk).

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The introduction of tantric texts, which likely emerged in India in the seventh century, "changed the face of religious practice across Asia" (p. 1) according to Jacob P. Dalton. The primary focus was complex and elaborate rituals; these featured innovative myths, new gods, unfamiliar cosmologies, and elaborate practices involving secrecy, hierarchy, and transgression. Tantric texts come in sundry forms, with the ritual manual especially prevalent; *sādhanās* covering ritual transformations, *kalpas* covering ritual spaces, and *vidhis* covering initiations, for example. This book focuses on ritual manuals in Tibetan discovered in Cave 17 near Dunhuang, a city in northwestern Gansu Province, Western China. Despite mostly dating from the tenth century, these texts reflect ritual changes from late eighth century India.

The manuals are paradoxical in other ways; the imperial Pugyel court in Tibet banned the study of such texts, yet texts about *Mahāyoga* (Inner Tantra) practices were written in Tibet. Few texts have named authors, but there is an assumption that monastics wrote them; there are artistic representations that accompany the textual descriptions. Some texts are sutras (often *dhāraṇī* mantras) and commentaries, but a large group are ritual manuals, ranging from earlier plain instructions to later poetic elaborations. Dalton's avowed intent is to "tread a fine line, to follow each [ritual manual] through its … maze of ritual twists and turns while remaining open to the possibility of unexpected moments of poetry, when time slows, space opens, and a different type of experience is suggested" (p. 25).

Chapter One, "Ritual Manuals and the Spread of the Local," shows how extracanonical manuals spread in tandem with canonical texts, and interrogates the *dhāraṇī* sutras in terms of "ritualized recitation" (p. 35) and how they gave rise to standalone manuals. Most of the Dunhuang *dhāraṇī* texts are linked to sutras and are useful for development of tantra. Chapter Two, "From *Dhāraṇī* to Tantra: The *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana*," is concerned with this specific text, and the related amulets that exist. Dalton argues that the *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* is a highly malleable prototype, and that the Dunhuang texts show multiple reworkings of its contents. A *Sarvadurgatipariśodhana* manual is provided in translation at the end of the chapter.

Chapter Three, "Evoking Possession: The *Sarvatathāgata-tattvasaṃgraha*,"

discusses "postinitiatory practice[s] of the *sadhana*" (p. 99). Dalton notes that by the mid-seventh century tantric texts were multiplying at a great rate and a new system focused on the "practitioner's imagined union with a buddha" (p. 103) became prominent. The book discusses ritual practices in detail and gives an account of the five stages of awakening. The initiate self-consecrates and generates an experience of becoming a deity. Chapter Four, "Secretory Secrets: Sexual Yoga in Early *Mahāyoga*," opens with the power of meditation on the foul, moving to the role of sexual intercourse in enlightenment. In the mid-eighth century texts that advocated sex as a secret practice that could lead to awakening, while transgressing the boundaries of "ordinary limits" (p. 168).

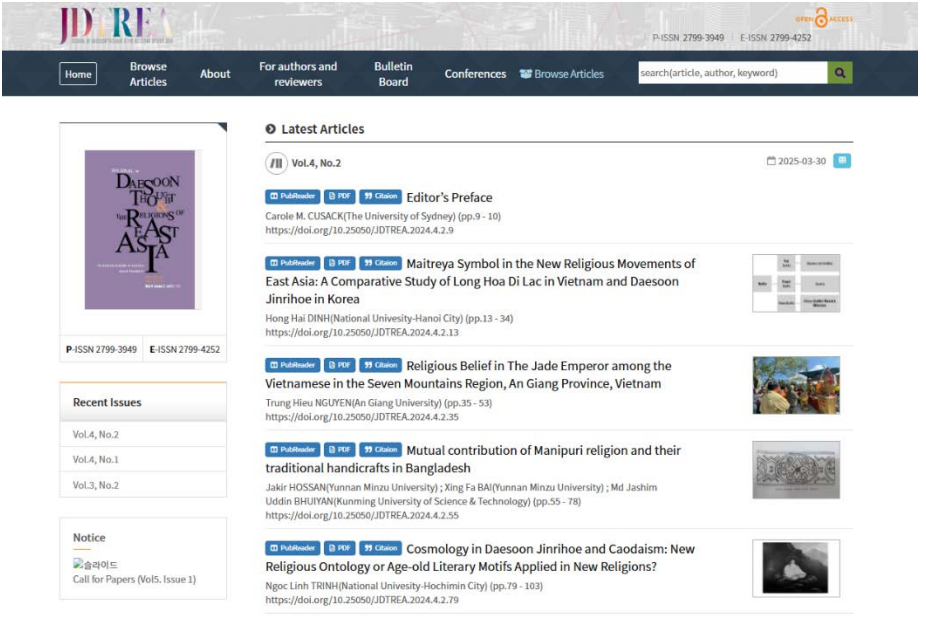
Chapter Five, "Circles of Blazing Breaths: A Manual for Mantrarecitation," discusses a group of texts including Pelliot tibétain 634 and Pelliot tibétain 626. The questions investigated include whether the texts were written in Tibet or in Dunhuang, and the function of "methods for cycling the breath between sexual partners" (p. 202) as ways to manipulate the "subtle winds" of the body (p. 202). All chapters contain translations of distinct texts that illustrate or confirm the arguments made by the author throughout. The "Conclusions" summarises the findings of the research, arguing that early tantric Buddhist practices can be extracted from the Dunhuang texts, and that early manuals were presented as written by humans, while later manuals contained material that was attributed to the Buddha himself. As the texts changed, new practices were instigated; initiations, fire offerings, and meditations, to name a few. Paralleling this process was the development of poetic language to describe tantric practices, a trend that peaked in the mid-late eighth century.

Conjuring the Buddha: Ritual Manuals in Early Tantric Buddhism is a highly intelligent, well-read, admirably argued book that has the advantage of being focused on a narrow group of texts from a defined region and temporal period, which are of importance for the development of *tantra*, a movement that radically transformed Buddhism. The text is often complex and occasionally difficult to read, but the argument is ultimately clear and well-presented. It will be of interest to students and scholars of Buddhist Studies and esotericism.

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