



The Landscape of Last Days Foretold by Religions: Differentiation of Prophecy among New Religions under Japanese Colonial Rule

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Abstract

During the period of Japanese colonial rule, many indigenous new religions in Joseon disseminated diverse apocalyptic landscapes based on secret texts collectively referred to as Jeonggamnok. Until now, these prophecies have been regarded as depicting apocalyptic landscapes of Japan's defeat and Korea's independence in a fixed, formulaic pattern. However, when comparing the specific apocalyptic landscapes depicted by each new religion, we can see that the prophecies of Jeonggamnok functioned not only as tools of resistance and revolution but also as means of helpless resignation and survival to adapt to the real world. This article aims to show that from the 1910s to the 1930s, prophecies based on Jeonggamnok circulated different forms of apocalyptic landscapes, moving between resistance and compromise. The apocalypse was the approaching end of the universe and history, a future already partially realized through colonization and modernization, and also an inner world where a mind withdrawn from the external found happiness. We need to closely examine the diverse apocalyptic landscapes based on Jeonggamnok in order to capture the eschatology of new religions, which has been described only in terms such as gaebyeok (cosmic renewal or great awakening) or hucheon (Later Heaven), in a more dynamic and historical context.

Keywords: *Jeonggamnok*, paradise on earth, Donghak, Cheongnimgyo, Baekbaekgyo, Hwangsin jeguk daejeonggyo, Indogyo, Taegeukdo, *gaebyeok*

This work was supported by the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Korea and the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF-2022S1A5B5A16056586).

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Similar but Different Apocalyptic Landscapes

Most of the quasi-religious organizations that did not enjoy freedom of propagation during the period of Japanese colonial rule were Korean indigenous new religions. In particular, after the Manchurian Incident of 1931, as public sentiment became unstable, the Government-General of Korea devoted considerable effort to cracking down on and controlling quasi-religious organizations in Joseon. The reasons were that quasi-religions disturbed public order and stirred up public sentiment, hindering the maintenance of security; that many displayed strong nationalist overtones in their religion; and therefore, that they often committed the crime of *lèse-majesté* or the crime of spreading rumors and false reports. At that time, many quasi-religious organizations were punished mainly under the Security Law for prophesying, based on *Jeonggamnok* 鄭鑑錄, the advent of the *True Human* (*jinin* 真人) and the establishment of a new state, and for disturbing public order by arousing national consciousness through politically subversive speech and actions. Even when they advocated national independence or Japan's defeat, such acts were regarded merely as religious delusion and thus received relatively light punishment. However, in exceptional cases such as Kim Yeong-sik's 金靈植 Hwanggeukgyo 黃極教 and Kim Hong-gi's 金弘基 Seondogyo 仙道教, which were identified as political secret associations disguised as quasi-religions, the heavier Public Order Preservation Law, rather than the Security Law, was applied (*Shisō ihō* 1940, 45–49). In addition, such associations were often arrested for fraud on charges of misappropriating the property or money of believers.

Lèse-majesté, as defined by Articles 74 and 76 of the Japanese Penal Code, was the crime of insulting the dignity of the emperor, the imperial family, imperial shrines, or imperial tombs, punishable by imprisonment for between two months and five years (Kaji 1924, 231–232). *Lèse-majesté* was promulgated on March 18, 1912, and applied to Korea through Regulation No. 11: Korea Criminal Ordinance, which took effect on April 1 (CST 1912a, 7–9). Under the Police Offenses Punishment Rules, promulgated by the Japanese Government-General of Korea on March 15, 1912, and effective from April 1, those falling under Article 1, Item 21—“those who spread

rumors or false reports that could mislead people”—were mainly punished by detention or fines (CST 1912b, 213). However, after the outbreak of the Second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, rumors about the war situation were punished with imprisonment under the Military Penal Code (*Keijō nippō* 1937). In addition, the Security Law, enforced from July 27, 1907, was also applied to public assemblies, associations, and press activities that disturbed public order (*Gwanbo* 1907).

Article 1 of Japan's Law No. 46: Public Order Preservation Law, enacted on April 22, 1925, and enforced in Korea from May 12, stipulates: “A person who organizes an association with the aim of altering the national polity or denying private property, or who joins it knowing its purpose, shall be punished by imprisonment or penal servitude for not less than ten years” (CST 1925, 333). The Public Order Preservation Law was a law applicable to communists, nationalists, and quasi-religious groups that denied the national polity. On June 29, 1928, the law was amended by Imperial Ordinance No. 129 so that those who sought to alter the national polity could be sentenced to death or life imprisonment (CST 1928, 29). On March 8, 1941, an amendment was promulgated as Law No. 54: Public Order Preservation Law and enforced from May 15. In particular, Article 7 stipulated that “those who organize an association for the purpose of denying the national polity or disseminating matters that could insult the dignity of imperial shrines or the imperial household, or who serve in leadership roles in such an association, shall be punished by life imprisonment or imprisonment of not less than four years; and those who, knowing its purpose, join the association or perform acts for its objectives shall be punished by imprisonment of not less than one year,” thereby making it possible to punish “unruly quasi-religious organizations” solely under the Public Order Preservation Law, which absorbed the crime of *lèse-majesté* (*Maeil sinbo* 1941; CST 1941a, 2–4; CST 1941b, 159).

What then were the specific contents of the crime of *lèse-majesté* or the crime of spreading rumors and false reports that were presented as decisive grounds for the suppression and dissolution of quasi-religious organizations? At the time, many indigenous new religions in Korean spread prophecies based on various secret texts collectively referred to as *Jeonggammok* 鄭鑑錄. In particular, prophecies based on *Jeonggammok* seem to describe apocalyptic

scenes of Japan's defeat and Korea's independence in a fixed pattern like a formula. Generally, it was said that on the day of the apocalypse, the religion's leader, or True Human (*jinin* 真人), would establish a capital at Gyeryongsan 鷄龍山, ascend as king, defeat Japan, achieve Korea's independence, and create a new state, new society, or earthly paradise, with the religion's believers rising to high official positions and enjoying prosperity. However, when comparing the specific apocalyptic landscapes depicted by each new religion, we can see that the prophecies of the *Jeonggamnok* functioned not only as tools of resistance and revolution but also as means of helpless resignation and survival to adapt to the real world. This article aims to show that from the 1910s to the 1930s, prophecies based on *Jeonggamnok* circulated different forms of apocalyptic landscapes, moving between resistance and compromise.

The Invisible Book Called *Jeonggamnok*

In 1923, the Government-General of Korea took the highly unusual step of permitting the publication of *Jeonggamnok*, which was considered a *subversive book*. As a result, the many secret prophetic manuscripts (*bigyeolseo* 秘訣書, *bigyeol* 秘訣) that collectors had been gathering were, for the first time in history, published in print under the best-known title *Jeonggamnok*. On February 15, 1923, Hosoi Hajime's 細井肇 *Jeonggamnok* was published; on March 19, 1923, Kim Yong-ju's *Jeonggamnok* and Yanagita Bunjiro's 柳田文治郎 *Jinbon jeonggamnok* 真本鄭堪錄 were published; and on April 18, 1923, Hyeon Byeong-ju's 玄丙周 *Binan jeonggamnok jinbon* 批難鄭鑑錄真本 was published (Hosoi 1923; Y. Kim 1923; Yanagita 1923; Hyeon 1923).¹

Here, I will examine the circumstances surrounding the publication of *Jeonggamnok*, focusing on Hosoi Hajime's printed edition (1923) with its introduction, "*Jeonggamnok no kentō*" (Examination of *Jeonggamnok*). An announcement on the planned publication of what ended up being *Jeonggamnok* had in fact been made three years earlier. In 1920, Hosoi had

1. For the relationship between new religions and the *Jeonggamnok* during the Japanese colonial period, see Kim Tak (2019).

announced his intention to publish a translation of the *Bigyeol jimnok* 秘訣輯錄. However, as Hosoi later explained, it took him three years just to edit the *Bigyeol jimnok* 秘訣輯錄 and to obtain the tentative manuscripts (*uisagobon* 疑似稿本) of the *Bigyeol jimnok* and compare the different versions, and because he was suffering from an eye disease, Shimizu Genkichi 清水鍵吉 had carried out the direct Japanese translation and proofreading on his behalf. However, due to time constraints and the worsening of his eye ailment, Hosoi only managed to translate into Japanese four secret prophetic manuscripts, collectively referred to as *Jeonggamnok*, from the *Bigyeol jimnok*, which seems to have determined the title of the book. Subsequently, due to the limitations of this initial printed translation, it appears that the entire *Bigyeol jimnok* came to be generically referred to as *Jeonggamnok* (Hosoi 1923, 44–45).

According to an old book catalog of the Government-General of Korea, as of March 1921, various secret prophetic manuscripts, including the *Bigyeol jimnok*, *Jeonggamnok* 鄭鑑錄, *Jeonggamnok* 鄭堪錄, *Doseon bigyeol* 道宣秘訣, *Muhak bigi* 無學秘記, *Tojeong gajanggyeol* 土亭家藏訣, *Bukchang bigyeol* 北窓秘訣, *Seosandaesa bigyeol* 西山大師秘訣, *Dusachong bigyeol* 杜師聰秘訣, *Seogyegajanggyeol* 西溪家藏訣, *Namsago bigyeol* 南師古秘訣, and *Bigyeol jeonjip* 秘訣全集, were already in its collection (GGK 1921, 178–179). Therefore, it is presumed that Hosoi's printed edition made use of the Government-General's *Bigyeol jimnok* and other such texts. In his introduction to his translation, Hosoi stated that the *Jeonggamnok* was in fact a popular name that actually served as a general designation for *Gamgyeol* 鑑訣, *Dongguk yeokdae gisu bongung eumyanggyeol* 東國歷代氣數本宮陰陽訣, *Yeokdae wangdo bongungsu* 歷代王都本宮數, and *Samhan sallim bigi* 三韓山林秘記, the four prophetic texts Hosoi translated for inclusion in his *Jeonggamnok* (Hosoi 1923, 1).² Thus, among the secret prophetic manuscripts contained in the Government-General's *Bigyeol jimnok*, Hosoi translated only the above four into Japanese, while the remaining manuscripts were included but without translation. At the end of the book, Hosoi added an appendix containing manuscripts tentatively attributed to the *Bigyeol jimnok*. In the table of contents as well, it is made

2. The manuscript *Jeonggamnok* 鄭鑑錄 (Kyujanggak ID 奎12371) held at Seoul National University also groups the four secret texts under the common title *Jeonggamnok*.

clear that only the original texts of the aforementioned four secret prophetic manuscripts and their Japanese translations are designated as *Jeonggammnok*. Had the entire *Bigyeol jimnok* been translated, Hosoi's book would have been published under the title *Bigyeol jimnok*, not *Jeonggammnok*.

The source text presumed for *Bigyeol jimnok* is a handwritten manuscript that includes *Jeonggammnok haeje* (Introduction to the *Jeonggammnok*), written in February 1913 by Ayukai Fusanosin 鮎貝房之進 (Ayukai 1913; Paik 2006, 231–260; Park 2018, 295–303). Ayukai (1913) describes the *Jeonggammnok* as a collection of secret texts that judge fortune based on the geography of the eight provinces of Korea, saying that due to bans, they existed only in small pocket-sized copies and that there were no printed editions. He also notes that “even if the individual books differ, they invariably include dialogues of Jeong 鄭 at the beginning, which is why the name *Jeonggammnok* is the most widely known.” He further relates that already in the early Meiji 明治 period there was a prophecy regarding “the fall of the Yi dynasty after 500 years” in Joseon, and before the Russo-Japanese War there was a prophecy that in the *gyeongsul* 庚戌 year (1910) the fortune of Hanyang (Seoul) would shift beneath the red sun. The *Seungjeongwon ilgi* (Diaries of the Royal Secretariat) contains references to *Jeonggammnok* (either 正鑑錄 or 鄭鑑錄) as early as 1739, while the *Joseon wangjo sillok* (Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty) also begin to mention *Jeonggammnok* from 1782.³ Therefore, it appears that from the early 18th century the term *Jeonggammnok* came to be generally used as a reference to secret prophetic texts.

The December 19, 1899 issue of the Seoul newspaper *Hwangseong sinmun* presented three harmful effects of *Jeonggammnok* (*Hwangseong sinmun* 1899). First, under such slogans as, “ten places of refuge” (*sipseungji* 十勝地) and “to seek human seed in the two whites,” many entered deep mountains without grain or salt and died, while eight or nine out of ten who abandoned their relatives and ancestral graves returned having squandered their property. Second, there were those who put faith in wild predictions, viewed disorder as imminent, insisted that property was unnecessary, and spent their entire lives

3. *Seungjeongwon ilgi*, vol. 890, 15th day of the 5th month and 9th day of the 6th month, 1739; *Jeongjo sillok*, vol. 14, 20th day of the 11th month, 1782. See also Han (2018, 450).

in idleness. Third, were groups who, as in the case of Donghak 東學, believed in the *Jeonggamnok*, chanted *gunggung euleul ga* 弓弓乙乙歌, incited the people, and threw the state into disorder. This suggests that by the late 19th century, the name *Jeonggamnok* was already quite well known through new religious movements such as Donghak.

In *Chōsen no shūkyō* (Religion in Korea), published in July 1908, Tsuruya Kairyū 鶴谷誠隆, a missionary of Jōdoshū 淨土宗 (Pure Land Buddhism), recounts an interesting anecdote about the relationship between Jeonggam 鄭鑑 and the Yi 李 dynasty of Joseon (Tsuruya 1908, 80–83). Jeong Gam, born in the late Goryeo period, was friendly with the Yi clan, but when the Yi became kings he hid on Gyeryongsan (Mt. Gyeryong) in Chungcheong-do and there composed secret prophetic manuscripts. Following his death, his descendants studied geomancy and continued to live in seclusion on Gyeryongsan. Later, one of Jeong Gam's descendants was wandering in a field when the sky suddenly darkened, clouds thickened, and a violent thunderstorm broke, only for the weather to clear abruptly. Suddenly, looking ahead, the man saw that the ground had split open to form a large ditch, and at its bottom lay a strange piece of paper inscribed with divine incantations. It read: "If you recite this spell day and night, your descendants will become rich and attain high office, and if you recite it on the battlefield, arrows, stones, swords, and guns will lose their power." This descendant considered it a revelation from heaven, and scholars from all around came to receive the spell. However, when rumors spread that the Yi dynasty's 500-year mandate had ended and the Jeong 鄭 clan would replace the Yi, the Joseon government sent people to massacre the Jeong family near Gyeryongsan, but by then their magic arts had already spread to Chungcheong-do, Jeolla-do, and Gyeongsang-do provinces. And it was said that those who learned the Jeong clan's magical arts formed a large organization and raised the banner of rebellion in Joseon—that was the Donghak movement.

Imanishi Ryū 今西龍, in his "Jeonggamnok kaidai" (Introduction to *Jeonggamnok*) written in December 1911, also provides evidence that *Jeonggamnok* were being collected by the Japanese in the early 20th century (Imanishi 1912, 53–56). Around 1907, a man named Ishii 石井 came across a *Jeonggamnok* in Gyeongseong 鏡城, Hamgyeongbuk-do province, transcribed

it, and gave the copy to Matsumiya Shun'ichirō 松宮春一郎. Imanishi says he himself saw another copy that Dr. Shidehara Taira 幣原坦 subsequently transcribed. Later, Dr. Hagino Yoshiyuki 萩野由之 acquired a *Jeonggamnok* version in the form of a document rather than a book while collecting old books in Gyeongseong (Seoul). Imanishi prepared his Introduction based on Shidehara's copy. Imanishi notes that the main section of the *Jeonggamnok* is "Geographical Dialogues" (*Jiri mundap* 地理問答) placed at the very beginning. Thus, it is evident that even before Ayukai Fusanosin's manuscript copy, there already existed documents or booklets referred to as *Jeonggamnok*. Imanishi states that since Joseon's lifespan was described as "preserving the state for 400 years," this version was likely written during the reign of king Yeongjo 英祖 or Jeongjo 正祖. A *Jeonggamnok* text discovered in 1794 (18th year of King Jeongjo) in the ridgepole of a small hermitage called Muhak-am 無學庵 was transcribed in 1890, and a subsequent re-copy of this transcription constituted the original of the Shidehara manuscript.

In this way, even before Hosoi's *Jeonggamnok* was published in 1923, there was widespread awareness of the existence of such texts among the Japanese (Park 2024, 43–57). *Chōsen saikinshi: fu kankoku heigōshi* (Recent History of Korea: With an Account of the Annexation of Korea), published in 1912 by Tokano Yoshio 戸叶薫雄 and Narasaki Kan'ichi 榑崎觀一, and *Rōdō shinri* (Psychology of Labor), published in 1919 by Takamine Hiroshi 高峰博, both discuss how the prophecies of the *Jeonggamnok* operated (Tokano and Narasaki 1912, 265–266; Takamine 1919, 107–109). For example, the phrase "the iron horse comes to the banks of the Han River and cries" was interpreted to refer to the opening of the Gyeongin 京仁 Railway and the construction of a railway bridge over the Han River, with trains speeding across while blowing their whistles. Also, the phrase "profit lies in *songsong*" (*ijae songsong* 利在松松) was interpreted to refer to the fact Songhwa 松禾 and Songdo 松都 both escaped devastation during the *imjin waeran* 壬辰倭亂 (Japanese invasion of 1592), while "profit lies in every household" (*ijae gaga* 利在家家) was taken to mean that those who stayed at home were spared during the *byeongja horan* 丙子胡亂 (Manchu invasion of 1636). During the period of Japanese colonial rule, there were various interpretations of *Jeonggamnok*'s "profit lies in *gunggung euleul*" (*ijae gunggung euleul* 利在弓弓乙乙), which was circulated

at the time. *Gunggung euleul* 弓弓乙乙 was interpreted to mean “crab-walking script” (*haehaeng munja* 蟹行文字), that is, Western writing written horizontally, suggesting that those who studied abroad or adopted Western styles would achieve wealth and honor. Alternatively, *gunggung euleul*, when combined into a single character, was thought to become *yak* 弱 (weak), leading to a pessimistic interpretation that one should no longer resist the prevailing trend by living strongly but instead live submissively in weakness. According to Takamine Hiroshi, Son Byeong-hui 孫秉熙 of Cheondogyo 天道教 also adopted *gunggung euleul* to emphasize the meaning that “the soft overcomes the hard, and the weak overcomes the strong.” Takamine asserts that even the non-violent nature of the March First Movement might have been due to the prophecy of *gunggung euleul*. There was also an interpretation that no matter how strong Japan was, if Koreans employed a strategy like the form of the characters *euleul* 乙乙, whose head and tail were indistinguishable, that would surely benefit Korea (Nishimura 1940, 214). Hosoi also criticizes the “ten places of refuge” found in the *Jeonggammnok* as a “guide to humiliation” and a “funeral bell for a ruined nation,” intended solely to preserve one’s own life by turning one’s back and fleeing when national calamities occur and the royal shrine (*jongsa* 宗社) collapses (Hosoi 1923, 37).

The *Sinhan minbo* of October 12, 1910, carried a critical article claiming the Japanese were using *Jeonggammnok* to justify the annexation of Korea. For example, regarding the passage from the “Gamgyeol” 鑑訣 section of *Jeonggammnok* 鄭鑑錄 that reads, “In the autumn of the sacred year, in the 8th month, a thousand ships anchor at night between Incheon and Bupyeong,” the Japanese claimed that “the sacred year” referred to the year 1910, the *gyeongsul* 庚戌 year when Confucius was born, and that this prophecy foretold the arrival of the Japanese fleet between Incheon and Bupyeong on August 21, 1910, followed by the annexation of Korea the following day. The Japanese also interpreted the *Jeonggammnok* prophecy that reads, “In the third year of provisional rule, the True Human (真人) will emerge from an island in the sea,” claiming that “provisional rule” referred to the rule of the Japanese Resident-General who governed in place of the Korean emperor, that “the island in the sea” denoted Japan itself, and that the “True Human” was the Japanese governor-general. Given that the *Sinhan minbo* was published not

in Korea but in San Francisco, it appears that this article reported rumors that lacked concrete evidence. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that during the colonial period, a “struggle of interpretations and rumors” over the prophecies of *Jeonggammnok* may have unfolded between Koreans and Japanese (*Sinhan minbo* 1910; T. Kim 2005, 214–216).

Chōsen keisatsu gyōsei yōgi (Essentials of Police Administration in Korea), published in 1916 by Nagano Kiyoshi 永野清, also notes that “in *Jeonggammnok*, it is recorded that the Wang clan 王氏 would reign in Songdo for 300 years, the Yi clan 李氏 in Hanyang 漢陽 for 500 years, and the Jeong clan 鄭氏 in Gyeryongsan for 800 years” (Nagano 1916, 326).⁴ In 1921, Yoshino Sakuzō 吉野作造 also introduced the prophecy of the *Jeonggammnok*, stating, “In Joseon, there is a kind of superstition that as the country gradually declines and eventually disappears, a sage will appear from the eastern sea and build a new nation” (Arishima et al. 1920, 210). According to Hosoi’s “*Jeonggammnok no kentō*,” there was a rumor circulating in Godeok-myeon in Yesan-gun, Chungcheongnam-do, that “after three years of the Japanese king and three years of the provisional capital, the real Jeong king 鄭王 will appear and establish a country at the new capital on Gyeryongsan.” Here, the “three years of the Japanese king” was interpreted to refer to the terms of the three Japanese governor-generals, Terauchi Masatake, Hasegawa Yoshimichi, and Saitō Makoto, while “three years of the provisional capital” referenced the number of years of the Korean Provisional Government in Shanghai, and thus it was claimed Korea would certainly achieve independence in 1921. There was also a rumor that if three thousand dolls were carved and offered at Gyeryongsan, the Japanese would leave in April 1922. Even in the Cheondogyo movement, there was talk that its founder Choe Je-u would be resurrected in 1920, the 61st year after Donghak’s founding, and accomplish the great task of world unification. By 1923, Hosoi was already showing hostility by categorizing Cheondogyo, Cheongnimgyo, Taeulgyo, and Seondogyo together as “superstitious and heterodox cults,” which distorted the wording of the *Jeonggammnok* and spread fabricated delusions (Hosoi, 1923, 7, 10–11).

4. For a typological classification of the various prophecies concerning the lifespan of the Joseon dynasty, see Choi (2021).

During the 1910s, when World War I was raging, various rumors based on the *Jeonggammok* appear to have circulated concerning Korea's independence. For example, there was a prophecy that said: "In the end, the war will turn into Germany's victory, Korea will also become a field of war, and even if catastrophic changes occur and all of humanity perishes, only those who believe in our religion will avoid calamity, and afterward Jeong will establish the capital at Gyeryongsan, and believers will receive ranks and stipends according to the original register of faith and the weight of their missionary achievements" (Hosoi 1923, 11–12). There was also a prophetic rumor during the war that Germany's successive victories against the Allies were due to the presence of multiple Korean officers, including Jeong, in the German army, and that Jeong and others would soon return to Korea leading a large force to drive out the Japanese. There were also religious groups that propagated assertions such as, "if you believe in our religion, you can accomplish anything you desire," "by mastering Daoist immortal arts (*seonsul* 仙術), you can soar through the air like a bird," or "bullets will be unable to harm you" (Hosoi 1923, 12). These prophecies are also similar to the so-called *cargo cults* that appeared in the Melanesian region, whose believers asserted that resurrected ancestors would load material civilization onto steamers and return, bringing liberation from the colonial condition and the beginning of a true paradise. In the cargo cults, it was believed that the material civilization of the white people was in fact the creation of the dead ancestors, and that the white people had prevented the ancestors' resurrection and stolen their material civilization—that is, the cargo. Therefore, the resurrection of the ancestors detained in the West and their return carrying the *stolen cargo* marked the beginning of paradise. The belief that the True Human, who was working for Westerners for whatever reason, would return to Korea and bring about its independence also reveals a similar pattern to that of the cargo cults. In the cargo cults, people were even observed rushing toward machine guns in the belief that after drinking the sacred water of immortality, "the bullets that hit their bodies would turn into water" (Worsley 1957, 97–101, 141–142, 148–149).

Why then was the publication of *Jeonggammok* suddenly permitted in 1923? Nishimura Shintarō 西村真太郎 (1940, 211–212) describes the circumstances surrounding the publication of *Jeonggammok*. *Jeonggammok*,

which was designated a banned book during the Joseon period, existed in numerous variant editions, such as *Jeonggamnok* 鄭堪錄, *Jeongdamnok* 鄭湛錄, *Gamnoncho* 堪論抄, *Yoram yeokse* 要覽歷歲, and *Jingbirok* 徵秘錄, and was an *invisible book* cited as the source of orally transmitted rumors. The protagonists of *Jeonggamnok* numbered over twenty, centered on Jeong Gam 鄭鑑, and included Okryongja 玉龍子/Doseon 道誥, Muhak 無學, Namsago 南師古/Namgyeokam 南格庵, Tojeong 土亭, Seogye 西溪, Jeong Bukchang 鄭北窓, Seosan daesa 西山大師, Dusachong 杜師聰, and Samdobong 三道峰. Nishimura asserted that “the doctrines of quasi-religious groups are based solely on *Jeonggamnok*, into which the so-called three elements of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism are woven.” In this way, the Police Bureau of the Government-General of Korea regarded the *Jeonggamnok* as the very foundation of quasi-religions. They judged that by being designated a banned book, and thus circulating only orally under various names, or being secretly copied and distributed, *Jeonggamnok* gained even greater mystique and authority. Therefore, the Police Bureau promoted the public publication of *Jeonggamnok* in order to eradicate quasi-religions that were exploiting its secrecy. They attempted to dismantle the mystique of the *invisible book* by making *Jeonggamnok* visible. However, contrary to the Police Bureau’s intentions, *Jeonggamnok* was published in only a few editions by a handful of book brokers, generally printed in fewer than a thousand copies and selling only dozens to hundreds of copies. Moreover, rumors circulated that the *Jeonggamnok* sold on the market was not the real *Jeonggamnok*, and that the truly mysterious and inscrutable *Jeonggamnok* existed in another version—“that is the one we believe in” (Nishimura 1940, 212).

The Police Bureau adopted a strategy to demystify *Jeonggamnok* by fixing the various strange oral texts circulating under its name into a single, established text. They sought to weaken the power of its prophecies through canonization. Hyeon Byeong-ju 玄丙周, who published the *Binan jeonggamnok jinbon* (Critical True Edition of *Jeonggamnok*), also argues that the mystical power of the *Jeonggamnok* expanded because its secret prophecies were kept hidden while only the title *Jeonggamnok* became widely known. Therefore, he asserts that the moment *Jeonggamnok*’s secret prophecies appear, they must be made public so that both the title *Jeonggamnok* and its secret prophecies

will be forgotten and disappear (Hyeon 1923, 1–4). However, *Jeonggamnok* was a book that could never be completed and published, one that was ever in the act of creation, an eternally unfinished book that could not be fixed in writing. Contrary to the Police Bureau's expectations, *Jeonggamnok* was not a book meant to be read after being written down, but an invisible book that circulated orally as rumor before settling onto paper. *Jeonggamnok* was an *interpretive rumor* that, while based on brief written texts, traversed religion and society. In other words, *Jeonggamnok* was a magical book that exercised its greatest power only when it circulated as rumor, interpretation, and citation. *Jeonggamnok* was a fluid text shaped by ongoing interpretations of contemporary reality. For example, in the *Jeong Gam mundap* 鄭堪問答 (Jeong Gam Dialogues), there appears the phrase, "What ruins a country is iron and wood." This is interpreted as, "Are not cannons and bayonets made of iron? Both warships and bullets are all made of iron. This reveals the reality that iron destroys the country. But if one recites the incantation, even cannons turn into water, and warships become stuck on reefs, unable to move." This was a helpless argument claiming that the only way to overcome Western weapons was through magic and religion (*Gaminnok* 40; Nishimura 1940, 214).

Further, *Jeong Gam mundap* states: "Songak 松嶽 is the home of the Wang clan for over 400 years, Hanyang is the home of the Yi clan for 300 years, Gyeryong 鷄龍 is the home of the Jeong clan for 500 years, Gayasan 伽倻山 is the home of the Jo clan 趙氏 for 800 years, Palgongsan 八公山 is the home of the Wang clan 王氏 for 700 years, and in Wansan 完山, the Beom clan 范氏 eventually becomes king but with no fixed number of years." The time presupposed by the *Jeonggamnok*-type secret prophecies is distinguished by the cycles of dynastic change, but when all these cycles end, the end-time human appears. As the end approaches, human forms will become bizarre, becoming half-human, half-beast (半人半獸) figures such as human-headed snakes (蛇身人首), ox-headed humans (人身牛首), human-headed chickens (鷄身人首), and human-headed scorpions (蝮身人首). And when fathers and sons kill each other and the distinction between ruler and subject disappears, ritual propriety will be abolished, and the forces of yin and yang (陰陽) will naturally vanish. In particular, the last king of the Beom clan is depicted as emerging from a sea island in the form of a horse-headed human (馬首人身),

eight-*cheok* (八尺) tall, spewing flames from his mouth. In this way, *Jeong Gam mundap* depicts a situation in which, after all historical cycles are exhausted, humans return to the origin of life and the universe reverts to its primordial chaos and initial beginning, with *yeok* 易, astronomy and geography, and the order of yin and yang being newly reestablished. Regarding this, *Jeong Gam mundap* states: “In front of Heaven and Earth there is Heaven and Earth, and behind Heaven and Earth there is also Heaven and Earth” (*Gaminnok* 47–48; *Sansuron*; Choi 2022, 10–11).⁵

However, unlike *Jeong Gam mundap*, many other secret prophecies of the *Jeonggamnok* type often limit themselves to depicting the *end of the age* (*malse* 末世), during which historical cycles end and begin again, rather than the *cosmic renewal* (*gaebyeok* 開闢),⁶ where cosmic cycles begin and end. Thus, *Samhan sallim bigi* 三韓山林秘記 (Secret Records of the Forests of the Three Han) also states: “The supreme sage (上聖) knows what will happen at the end of Heaven and Earth; the ordinary sage (中聖) knows events of ten thousand years; and we merely know roughly three changes of nation and five relocations of the capital” (Hosoi 1923, 27). In this way, *Jeonggamnok* is filled with accounts of secret methods for seeking a *space of salvation* in order to survive within the time of prophecy, which moves from the end of the Joseon dynasty to the search for the ten places of refuge for deliverance and to the emergence of the Jeong king (鄭王). Also, when people were dying at home and dropping dead in the streets, the ten places of refuge were described as places that must be entered at neither too early nor too late a time, a place where the poor would survive but the rich would perish, and ultimately places of salvation only for the weak (Hosoi 1923, 5, 7–8). However, with the fall of the Joseon dynasty and the beginning of Japanese colonial rule, the secret prophecies of the *Jeonggamnok* type underwent considerable transformations in other directions. The *space of salvation* represented by the ten places of refuge was transformed into the construction of a *Heaven on Earth* by a

5. Also, “Jeongsa chongnon” (General Treatise on Jeongsa), *Sansuron*, Seoul National University Kyujanggak (想白古133-Sa58). In Yanagita Bunjirō’s *Jinbon jeonggamnok*, the section *Jeonggamnok* also contains expressions such as a horse-headed human (馬首人身) and a human-headed snail (蝸身人首).

6. Also translated, including in this special issue, as “great awakening.”

religious messiah, and the cosmic renewal or great awakening came to be emphasized more than the historical *end of the age*.

The Landscape of Last Days Foretold by New Religions

Choe Bok-sul 崔福述, that is, Choe Je-u 崔濟愚, the founder of Donghak 東學, said, “When Western enemies appear, money, grain, and soldiers wearing armor will be useless, and the enemy can be subdued only with incantations and sword dance (*geommu* 劍舞),” and, “Since wood is sharper than iron, if it deceives the eyes of Westerners and makes them mistake it for a treasured sword, then even if they possess solid armor and sharp weapons, they will not dare to approach me” (Yi 1928, 13). Choe Je-u, after being arrested in 1863, stated in his confession regarding Donghak’s incantations: “Since Westerners would first occupy China and then come to our country, making it impossible to predict future calamities, I composed a thirteen-character incantation to teach people so they could subdue Westerners” (Yi 1928, 15). He also stated about the sword dance: “One day, a heavenly spirit (*cheonsin* 天神) descended and taught me, saying, ‘Those who now travel back and forth by ship across the sea are all Westerners, and they cannot be subdued except through the sword dance,’ and gave me a sword song (*geomga* 劍歌).”⁷ In particular, Choe Je-u drew a circle on paper and then wrote a talisman (*bujeok* 符籙) with two *gung* 弓 characters at the edges for sick people as a form of medicine, and had them burn it, dissolve it in water and drink it, or chew and swallow it. This is precisely the spiritual talisman (*yeongbu* 靈符) in the form of *gunggung* 弓弓 or *taegeuk* 太極 called immortal medicine (*seonyak* 仙藥). According to the “Podeokmun” (Proclamation of Virtue) section of the *Donggyeong daejeon* (Great Compendium of the Eastern Scripture), Choe Je-u received this spiritual talisman from the Supreme Lord (Sangje 上帝) (Yun 1996, 25–28).

At that time, Choe Je-u is said to have stated that in the *imjin* 壬辰 year (1592), when the Imjin War broke out, “profit lay in *songsong*” (利在松松); in

7. *Gojong sillok* (Veritable Records of King Gojong), *gwon* 1, 29th day of the 2nd lunar month of the 1st year (1864) of King Gojong.

the *imsin* 壬申 year (1812), when the Hong Gyeong-nae Rebellion occurred, “profit lay in *gaga*” (利在家家); and in the *gapja* 甲子 year (1864), “profit lay in *gunggung*” (利在弓弓), so he sought to use a talisman inscribed with *gunggung*, burned and imbibed, as a charm against disease and as protection against Westerners. In *Jeonggamnok*, *gunggung* is depicted as a place for preserving the body and saving one’s life. For example, in the *Tojeong gajanggyeol* or the *Gyeongju yiseonsaeng gajanggyeol* 慶州李先生家藏訣, *gunggung* is described as *daeso gunggi* 大小弓基 in Samcheok 三陟, a place where the weak can overcome the strong. In the *Seogye yiseonsaeng gajanggyeol* 西溪李先生家藏訣, it is described as *hyeolha gungsin* 穴下弓身 (stooping like a bow beneath a cave). In the *Gamgyeol*, it appears as *yanggung* 兩弓, *sipseungji* 十勝地, and *yangbaek* 兩白 (M. Yi 1985, 12–23, 112–121, 129–132, 176–180). However, for Choe Je-u, *gunggung* was not a place of refuge to escape disaster, but rather a talisman. Rather than indicating a specific refuge place, Choe Je-u employed a method to make the person himself into “*gunggung* through the thirteen-character incantation, wooden sword, and sword dance, and by burning the spiritual talisman and mixing it in water to create *gungeul busu* 弓乙符水.

After Japan’s annexation of Korea, Cheongnimgyo 靑林教, a splinter group of Donghak, also developed a unique eschatology based on *Jeonggamnok*. According to police records, Han Byeong-su 韓秉洙 (d. 1924), founded Cheongnimgyo in 1912. In April 1913, Tae Du-seop 太斗燮 joined Cheongnimgyo, and after splitting from Han Byeong-su in February 1921, he made himself the sect leader in 1926 (KDCPO 1932). In 1930, Tae Du-seop’s Cheongnimgyo was known by the name Jungsimgyo 中心教, and it was a separate and different sect from Kim Sang-seol’s Cheongnimgyo. Tae Du-seop claimed that in the future, Jeong Cheon-ja 鄭天子 would establish the capital at Gyeryongsan with the aid of the Seven Immortal Officials (Chilseongwan 七仙官) located on the island of Namjindo 南辰島, also called Jahado 紫霞島, off the southern coast of Korea, and that when the Seven Immortal Officials appeared in this world to build a new nation, there would be fire rain and stone rain, and catastrophic changes of Heaven and Earth would occur, resulting in the massacre of all people. Indeed, based on *Jeonggamnok*, Tae Du-seop prophesied that on August 11 in the *gyeongo* 庚午 year (1930) stone rain and fire rain would fall. However, Cheongnimgyo followers would

wear devotional headscarves (*seonggeon* 誠巾), take refuge in a building called iron cage (*cheolgwon* 鐵圈), and if they raised an iron flag (*cheolgi* 鐵旗) there, they would be safe, and learned believers would receive high official positions in the new nation. Also, although there would be widespread famine and epidemic disease would spread, causing many to die of starvation, Cheongnimgyo followers would survive with the help of the iron provisions (*cheollyang* 鐵糧), a kind of immortal medicine (*seonyak* 仙藥), given by the Seven Immortal Officials (*Shisō ihō* 1935, 183; *Maeil sinbo* 1930).⁸

The *cheolgwon* was seen as an iron shelter that could withstand fire rain and stone rain, and only those with an iron flag could enter; the Seven Immortal Officials would appear there to teach disaster-prevention techniques. In fact, Tae Du-seop attempted to construct *cheolgwon* at nine locations, including Bonghwangsan 鳳凰山 in Deokwon-gun, Hamgyeongnam-do, in the fourth lunar month of 1929 at a cost of around 120 *won*. The *cheollyang* was advertised as a spiritual medicine (*yeongyak* 靈藥) received from the Seven Immortal Officials on Namjindo that would allow survival during famines, but in reality it was a powdered medicine made by mixing buckler fern (貫衆), *Rhynchosia volubilis* (鼠目太), *Poria cocos* Wolf (白茯苓), and other ingredients. While inheriting *Jeonggammok* motifs such as Gyeryongsan, Jeong Doryeong, and Namjindo, Tae Du-seop reinterpreted disasters in modern terms through fire rain and stone rain, transformed the ten places of refuge into air-raid shelters called *cheolgwon*, and re-described the Daoist fasting practice (*byeokgok* 辟穀) as *cheollyang*, thus constructing Cheongnimgyo's own unique apocalyptic landscape. He also developed a soteriology in which the Seven Immortal Officials on this mythic island, including Maitreya Buddha, Zhang Ling 張陵, Choe Chi-won 崔致遠, and Choe Je-u, would assist Jeong Doryeong in founding a new nation and saving people from war, disease, and famine. The *cheolgwon* replaced the ten places of refuge of the *Jeonggammok*, and *cheollyang* replaced Choe Je-u's spiritual talisman. Tae Du-seop was arrested in 1932 and sentenced to five years in prison on charges including violations of the Security Law and fraud.

One of the new religions most strongly influenced by the *Jeonggammok*

8. The *Maeil sinbo* article renders Tae Du-seop as Tae Jin-seop 太震變.

during the period of Japanese colonial rule was Baekbaekgyo 白白教, which became notorious through the 1937 mass murder case involving 346 victims. The religion's founder, Jeon Jeong-un 全廷芸 was born on October 4, 1868, in Hwahyeon-dong, Yeonsan-myeon, Yeongbyeon-gun, Pyeonganbuk-do, the second son of slash-and-burn farmer Jeon Gong-se 全公世. Having studied classical Chinese as a child, he went to Goseong-gun, Gangwon-do, to practice slash-and-burn farming while studying Donghak incantations and *Jeonggamnok*. Around 1902, he moved to Mayang-dong 馬陽洞, Unrim-myeon, Muncheon-gun, Hamgyeongnam-do, where he founded the Gagwangsanginsudo 家廣生人壽道, and preached that by chanting the *baek-ui-jeok* 白衣赤 incantation, one could remain free from illness and disaster, attain longevity without aging, and ultimately become an immortal being (*sinseon* 神仙). Later, when people took the character *baek* 白 from the incantation and began calling this religion Baekdogyo 白道教, Jeon Jeong-un changed its name. The *baek-ui-jeok* incantation, which includes the phrase “baekbaekbaek, uiuiui, jeokjeokjeok” 白白白 衣衣衣 赤赤赤, was a name created by altering the character *jeok* 賊 (bandit) from the *Jeonggamnok* phrase, “if you meet a *baek-ui-jeok* 白衣賊, marry them” into the homophone “*jeok*” 赤 (red) (Nagasaki 1937a, 313–314).

Jeon Jeong-un also claimed that he himself was the beardless one (無鬚者) of the *Jeonggamnok* who would save the people, and he predicted that in March of the *gapjin* 甲辰 year (1904), war would break out across Korea causing many deaths, but those who came to Mayang-dong would be able to survive. However, when his prophecy failed, his followers attacked, beating his close aide Cha Dal-ryong 車達龍 to death, and his elder brother Jeon Jeong-mo 全廷慕 committed suicide (Nagasaki 1937a, 314–315). On the 21st day of the 11th lunar month in 1919, Jeon Jeong-un died, and his second son Jeon Yong-hae 全龍海 (b. 1896), renamed Baekdogyo as Baekbaekgyo in 1923 (Lee 2021, 280–288). Jeon Yong-hae explained that the phrase in *Jeonggamnok*, “to seek human seed in the two whites,” referred to Baekbaekgyo, which would save humanity. Jeon claimed that although he was the son of God, he had temporarily taken human form to appear on Earth in order to send people to *yeongsan* 瀛山, the land of longevity without aging. He asserted that originally there were eight Geumgangsán 金剛山 peaks, but only one was currently

visible, and that in the end times, *yeongsan*—that is, the remaining seven peaks—would emerge from the East Sea (Nagasaki 1937a, 320–321).

Jeon Yong-hae also proclaimed that because the present world of material civilization was neglecting God, he had descended from Heaven at the command of Heavenly Father (Cheonbunim 天父任) Jeon Jeong-un, as the New Lord (Sincheonju 新天主), that is, the new Jesus, in order to judge the West with fire and the East with water. In the case of judgment by water, he claimed that 66 meters of snow would fall and accumulate, and when all this snow melted, a great flood would turn all the present land into sea. He also asserted that, according to *Jeonggamnok*, the land north of the Cheongcheon River in Pyeongannam-do would become the territory of the Ma clan 馬氏, and that all who lived there would be killed. Therefore, it was said that only 81,000 believers of Baekbaekgyo 白白教, who were the two whites, could survive such disasters through the spiritual power of the religious leader and go to *yeongsan* in the East Sea (Nagasaki 1937b, 279–280; KDC 1940a, 10). Baekbaekgyo also claimed that when Jeon Yong-hae ascended the throne at *yeongsan*, the believers would become high officials and live comfortably, and furthermore, if all of humanity believed in Baekbaekgyo, Jeon Yong-hae would become the ruler of the entire world (*Shisō ihō* 1937, 24).

There was also a new religion that regarded the Japanese emperor as the *True Human* (*jinin* 真人) and claimed that the prophecies of the *Jeonggamnok* were fulfilled through the annexation of Korea by Japan. Yi Jong-jin 李鍾震, also known as Yi Cha-seong 李且成, born in Chungdo-ri, Soi-myeon, Eumseong-gun, Chungcheongbuk-do, studied classical Chinese until about the age of 20, then chanted the Buddhist *Thousand Hands Sutra* (*Cheonsugyeong* 千手經) on Cheonangsan 天仰山 in Sokri-myeon, Boeung-gun, Chungcheongbuk-do. He converted to the new religious organization Daedong Buddhism 大東佛教 in Bunam-ri, Duma-myeon, Nonsan-gun, Chungcheongnam-do, and then spent about three years studying Buddhist scriptures in a cave on Seodaesan 西大山 in Seongdang-ri, Chubu-myeon, Geumsan-gun, Jeollabuk-do. Around the autumn of 1931, he became a believer in Gisagyō 箕師教, which worshiped Dangun 檀君, Gija 箕子, and Sejong 世宗 as the Three Deities, in Ukjeong 旭町, Gongju-eup, Gongju-gun, Chungcheongnam-do. Around May 1933, he founded Hwangsin jeguk

dajeonggyo 皇神帝國大正教, which worshiped Taishō Tennō 大正天皇, and proselytized about 100 followers in Gongju. From the 5th lunar month of the same year, he also assisted with missionary work at the Jōdo shinshū 浄土眞宗 mission center on Seodaesan, in Hwangyong-ri, Geumnam-myeon, Yeongi-gun, Chungcheongnam-do. In September 1933, he applied to the Japanese Government-General of Korea for permission to establish Dajeonggyo 大正教 and continued proselytizing, but around December of the same year, he was detained for five days at the Jochiwon Police Station in Chungcheongnam-do and was ordered to disband his sect (PIF 1936; Murayama 1935, 447–448; *Joseon jungang ilbo* 1936; *Dong-A Ilbo* 1936; *Keijō nippō* 1936; *Chōsen shinbun* 1936).

Around May 1935, he studied the *Samilsingo* 三一神告 of Dangungyo 檀君教 on Guryongsan 九龍山 in Hoebuk-myeon, Boeun-gun. He resolved to found a great religion and become its spiritual leader, and in March 1936 he came to Gyeongseong (Seoul), where he lodged in a cave belonging to Min Heung-im 閔興任 on the eastern slope of Bugaksan 北岳山, and later took up residence in Donam-dong. To obtain formal permission for proselytizing, in May of that year he sent a statement of purpose, petition, and religious constitution to the Governor-General of Korea, but on May 28 he was arrested by the High Division of the Yongsan Police Station on suspicion of leading a heretical cult. At the time, the daily *Gyeongseong ilbo* compared Yi Jong-jin of Dajeong-gyo to Deguchi Onisaburo 出口王仁三郎, the leader of Ōmoto-kyō 大本教 in Japan, who had been prosecuted on two counts—violation of the Public Order Preservation Law and the crime of lèse-majesté. However, Yi Jong-jin was sentenced to only 20 days of detention for arbitrarily interpreting the *Jeonggamnok*, falsely calling himself Bonghwangjeonha 奉皇殿下, imitating the political institutions of the Korean Empire (Daehan jeguk 大韓帝國), and deluding people with fictional rumors. At that time, he was raising funds to build a palace-like headquarters called the New Capital (Sindo 新都) in Duma-myeon, Nonsan-gun, Chungcheongnam-do.

Yi Jong-jin argued that Jeong *ssi* 鄭氏 (Jeong clan) in the *Jeonggamnok* actually referred to Jeong *ssi* 正氏. He argued that in Korean, Jeong 鄭 and Jeong 正 are homonyms, and that ultimately Jeong referred to the *shō* 正 in Taishō Tennō 大正天皇. Yi also founded Dajeonggyo by combining the

essence of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, and enshrined as ritual deities Heavenly God (Cheonsin 天神) as the Supreme Pontiff (*sangwon gyohwang* 上元教皇), Earth God (Jisin 地神) as the Middle Pontiff (*jungwon gyohwang* 中元教皇), and the Divine Lineage Emperor (Sintong hwangje 神統皇帝), that is Taishō Tennō, as the Daejeong Pontiff (*daejeong gyohwang* 大正教皇), and set *sintong* 神統 as the era name. He also claimed that through Daejeonggyo, Koreans and Japanese would be united as one and that an ideal nation would be built centered on the faithful. In this way, Yi Jong-jin claimed that Emperor Taishō, who ascended the throne in 1912 after the fall of the Yi dynasty of Joseon through the annexation by Japan, was the very Jeong ssi 鄭氏 foretold in the *Jeonggamnok*. Yi Jong-jin was also arrested in May 1937 for preaching Hwangsin jeguk daejeonggyo with Min Heung-im and others in a cave on Bugaksan (*Maeil sinbo* 1937). The Daejeonggyo appeared to usurp the royal title and to challenge the national polity of Japan, but it seems to have met with only lenient punishment because it remained merely an imaginary religion with little possibility of actual realization. Moreover, Yi Jong-jin, having previously been active in the Japanese Buddhist sect Jōdo shinshū, is presumed to have naturally learned the political strategies of survival available to colonial religions. Therefore, the Daejeonggyo may have adopted the interpretation of the *Jeonggamnok* that regarded Emperor Taishō as the True Human as its religious façade, while in fact propagating doctrines that originated from Dangungyo and Gisagyo.

New religions of the Jeungsan 甌山 lineage also used the *Jeonggamnok* to promote the construction of a new nation. Chae Gyeong-dae 蔡慶大 joined Bocheongyo 普天教 around April 1915, and left the religion after a conflict of opinion with the leader Cha Gyeong-seok 車京石 around 1923. Around April 1924, Chae built the Jeungsan Shrine 甌山祠堂 in Sinwol-ri, Deokcheon-myeon, Jeongeup-gun, Jeollabuk-do, the birthplace of Kang Il-sun 姜一淳, known as Jeungsan 甌山. On the 19th day of the 9th lunar month in 1930, Chae founded Jeungsangyo 甌山教, later renamed Indogyo 人道教 (IFCI 1937). He argued, based on the *Daesun jeongyeong* 大巡全經 (Canonical Scripture of Daesun), that the current society, the the Former Heaven (*seoncheon* 先天), was reaching its end due to mutual conflict (*sanggeuk* 相剋), and therefore proposed establishing a Later Heaven (*hucheon* 後天) society

through divine teaching (*singyo* 神敎). Chae also said, “The civilization of the Former Heaven era is a material civilization that fosters cruelty and violence and leads the world into chaos, and thus Kang Jeung-san 姜甌山 was born to reform this.” He also emphasized, “The Later Heaven new society will be such that all under heaven unite as one family with affection and solidarity, making military force, laws, and punishment unnecessary. Because all beings will be governed by an ideal political way, all traces of officials’ overreach, the resentment of the people, cruel oppression, and all other afflictions will be eliminated, and the world will transform into a land of wish fulfillment” (KDC 1940b). There is also Kang Jeung-san’s testamentary teaching that says, “Virtue spreads across the world; in the year of *in* 寅, a person arises. A divine spirit abides in the womb for eighty years.” In Indogyo, this was interpreted as meaning, “Chae Gyeong-dae, a Dharma Master of Jeungsangyo, is a great man born in the *in* 寅 year who will become the future king of Joseon.” Additionally, there was an interpretation that “at that time, the followers of this religion would be appointed to high official positions, and that Chae Gyeong-dae would gain spiritual power eighty years after the death of Choe Je-u, the founder of Donghak, and would then be able to immediately cure any incurable disease and grant a lifespan of fifty thousand years” (KDC 1939).

Chae Gyeong-dae claimed, based on the prophecy of Kang Il-sun, that in January of the *gyehae* 癸亥 year (1936), the Later Heaven world would emerge and that each follower would be appointed to high or important government positions. However, when this prophecy failed, around May 1936, he moved the headquarters from Gaekmang-ri, Deokcheon-myeon, Jeongeup-gun, Jeollabuk-do, to Jongno in Gyeongseong (Seoul), and renamed Jeungsangyo as Indogyo. Afterward, when the Dongdaemun Police Station pressured Indogyo to disband, Chae Gyeong-dae and others went into hiding in Goyang, and realizing that missionary activities in colonial Korea were impossible, on October 1 of the same year, they decided to relocate to Manchuria to revive their religion. Chae Gyeong-dae disguised Indogyo as a corporation called Sinnongsa 新農社, set up its headquarters in Fengtian (Mukden), Manchuria (Manchukuo), and attempted to expand into Manchuria, but was arrested in 1937. The name Sinnongsa is derived from the name of Sinnong 新農, the progenitor of agriculture. In particular, he proclaimed, “By the 3rd lunar

month of 1937, all of humanity will perish due to natural disasters, but only our followers will be spared from calamities. Furthermore, the construction of a new state will be completed solely by the hands of our followers, and the time will come when we will not only recover Korea's territory but also rule over the territory of the Japanese Empire. Therefore, we must now decisively subscribe to shares in Sinnongsa and move to Manchuria." Chae Gyeong-dae tried to raise 1.8 million *won* in funds and recruit twelve thousand followers to migrate to Manchuria and there to build a fifty-thousand-year-long paradise (IFCI 1937). In 1935, Indogyo had about six thousand followers. Chae Gyeong-dae was also accused of having established Sinnongsa based on the *Jeonggamnok* in order to build an ideal society in Manchukuo and to seek Korea's independence through a communist system. He was sentenced to ten months in prison at the Gyeongseong District Court on February 20, 1940, for violating the Security Law (KDC 1940b).

In "Mugeuk jingyeong" 無極真經 (Infinite True Scripture) of the new religion Taegeukdo 太極道, founded by Jo Cheol-je 趙哲濟, Kang Il-sun says that Korea can no longer compete with the West or Japan in terms of civilization or military power. There he also states, "The people of Korea believe in secret prophecies and seek only Jeong *ssi*; what use is it to seek only Jeong *ssi* without having learned anything? It only causes disturbances, so I have done away with the Jeong *ssi*, Jo *ssi*, and Beom *ssi*." In saying this, Kang emphasizes that the apocalyptic vision of the *Jeonggamnok* was no longer a suitable paradise for the modern world with trains and steamships. He describes the paradise of the Later Heaven as follows:

Cooking rice without making a fire, farming without getting one's hands dirty with soil, and setting up a lantern in each household so that the entire village will be as bright as daytime—electric lights now are merely a model of this. Also, trains will travel thousands of kilometers in an instant without fire-tubes, door handles and clothes hangers will be made of gold, and people will wear golden leather shoes. Grain seeds, once harvested, will sprout again from their roots each year, making planting and harvesting effortless, and even the poorest soil will become fertile because the ground was burned to a depth of one meter. (*Jingyeong*, 2:40)

According to Kang Il-sun, Matteo Ricci, after his death, returned to the West accompanied by Eastern spirits and opened a channel through which all spirits of Heaven and Earth could interact. As a result, underworld spirits ascended to Heaven to learn mysterious arts, opening the wisdom channels of Westerners, who then invented elaborate machines imitating paradise—this, he says, is modern Western material civilization. In “Mugeuk jingyeong” Kang Il-sun says that Jinmuk 震默, a monk of the Joseon period, led the civilization spirit of the East to the West and established what became modern civilization. Therefore, it is said that Cosmic Renewal will be accomplished by bringing Jinmuk back to our country to build the Later Heaven Paradise in Korea. The Later Heaven Paradise is not only a world of immortality without distinctions of wealth and poverty but also a place where one rides a cloud chariot to fly through the air, freely travels between Heaven and Earth through the lowered *heavenly gate*, and where time itself disappears (*Jingyeong*, 2:30–2:38). Here we encounter a situation in which the double bind between the despair brought about by colonization and the yearning for modernization is mediated through a *cargo cult*-like solution. In other words, Western material civilization is nothing more than the *stolen cargo* created by the spirits of Korea and the East, and when the spirits who crossed over to the West return, paradise will be established in Korea (Worsley 1957, 44, 71, 88). Such faith was not merely a repetitive reworking of indigenous mysticism or religiosity, but rather suggests the emergence of a new form of religiosity born from the intertwining of despair and hope produced by colonization and modernization. In colonial Korea, cases in which the eschatology and paradise theories based on *Jeonggamnok* transformed *religious power* itself into *political power* are rarely found. However, even though prophecies based on the *Jeonggamnok* continually failed, as long as social discontent that could not be resolved by other means persisted, the fundamental structure of prophecy appears to have been continually reinforced. New waves of religious fervor repeatedly erupted from the expectation that, although it had failed this time, it might not fail the next.

Transformation of the Idea of Paradise on Earth: From External Apocalypse to Internal Apocalypse

In the case of Japanese new religions, the thirteen sects of Sectarian Shinto (Kyōha Shintō 教派神道)—including Kurozumikyō 黒住教, founded by Kurozumi Munetada 黒住宗忠 in 1814; Tenrikyō 天理教, founded by Nakayama Miki 中山みき in 1838; and Misogikyō 禊教, founded by Inoue Masakane 井上正鐵 in 1840—began to acquire the status of authorized religions after 1884. However, according to a report compiled in 1926 by the Research Department of the Society for Social Education, based on an investigation by the Japanese Ministry of Education, there were at that time in Japan 65 Shinto-based groups, 29 Buddhist-based groups, and 4 Christian-based groups—a total of 98 new religions, including Ōmoto-kyō—that still remained *quasi-religions* unauthorized by the government. However, according to a 1930 survey by the Bureau of Religion of the Japanese Ministry of Education, the number of quasi-religious organizations had reached a total of 416 within only a few years. By 1935, it was said that a new quasi-religion was emerging almost every week, indicating that Japan had entered an era of explosive proliferation of new religions. Thus, unlike in colonial Korea, some Japanese new religions were early incorporated within the sphere of authorized religions under the residual classificatory category of Sectarian Shinto, while the rest remained outside the sphere of officially recognized religion as quasi-religions until the Religious Organizations Law was enacted in 1940. In contrast, throughout the period of Japanese colonial rule, all new religions in Korea remained confined within the framework of quasi-religions. In colonial Korea, after Choe Je-u founded Donghak in 1860, more than seventy quasi-religious organizations emerged. By around 1936, there were a total of sixty-seven sects, including eighteen of the Donghak lineage, eleven of the Heumchi 擘哆 lineage, ten Buddhist-based, seven Confucian-based, and sixteen associated with ancestor worship. However, by the mid-1930s, unlike in Japan, Korea's quasi-religions were gradually entering a period of decline under the Government-General of Korea's policy of purging heretical religions (Murayama 1936, 147–148).

The quasi-religions of Korea and Japan generally proclaimed an absolute

doctrine that synthesized the established religions, asserting that their founders, who had received divine revelation, were True Humans, that is, saviors, and aimed to overcome the hardships of daily life and establish a paradise on earth. How, then, can we explain the difference in the destinies that the quasi-religions of Korea and Japan faced in the mid-1930s? The quasi-religions of Korea often advocated the idea of Later Heaven Cosmic Renewal (Hucheon gaebyeok 後天開闢), drawing upon the changing relationship between Heaven and humanity, the cyclical movement of heavenly fortune, and the prophetic ideas of the *Jeonggamnok*. For example, Donghak synthesized Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, while reinterpreting the Catholic notion of Lord of Heaven (Cheonju 天主), thus presenting a new mode of religiosity. Choe Je-u spoke of a paradise on earth inhabited by humans united with Cheonju—that is, divine immortals (*sinseon* 神仙). Kang Il-sun 姜一淳 of Heumchigyo 畔哆教 likewise asserted that through the recitation of incantations one could reach a state of spiritual communion with divine spirits, where a realm of perfect freedom—in which all things could be commanded at will—would unfold before one’s very eyes. Furthermore, the quasi-religions of Korea not only sought to synthesize the established religions but also, through the concept of the True Human and the savior who personified the Lord of Heaven, the Supreme Lord (Sangje 上帝), and the divine spirits (*sillyeong* 神靈), pursued a synthesis of spiritual techniques and miracles rooted in the realm of folk belief. Murayama Chijun 村山智順 locates the reason *quasi-religions* declined in Korea but flourished in Japan during the mid-1930s in the differences evident in the movements to construct a paradise on earth and in the religious attitudes of believers. Even though, in doctrine, they advocated an ideal and spiritual paradise on earth, new religions in both Korea and Japan often oriented themselves toward a tangible and material paradise in order to appeal to the masses. However, the means of attaining paradise on earth differed between the new religions of the two countries (Murayama 1936, 155–159).

Japanese new religions often emphasized purifying the present world by removing the illnesses and misfortunes of believers and fulfilling their individual needs. Nakayama Miki, the founder of Tenrikyō, first experienced divine possession in 1838 and began writing one of the religion’s primary

scriptures, the *Ofudesaki* 御筆先, in 1869. The *Ofudesaki* teaches that the causes of illness and misfortune lie within the human heart, and that if the *eight dusts* are swept away from one's mind, personal suffering will disappear; when everyone lives according to this moral discipline, an ideal society will be realized. After suffering various forms of persecution following the Meiji Restoration, Tenrikyō, after the death of its founder, gained legal recognition in 1888 when it was incorporated as a subordinate church under the Bureau of Shinto Affairs (Shintō Honkyoku 神道本局) within the system of Sectarian Shinto, under the name Tenrikyō Church. Thereafter, through compromise with the imperial system and the removal of subversive elements from its doctrine, it was officially recognized as an independent religious organization in 1908. Tenrikyō pursued the realization of a paradise on earth where all people would neither fall ill, grow weak, nor die, but live a “joyous life” (*yōki gurashi* 陽氣ぐらし). In preparation for receiving *kanro* 甘露—the heavenly elixir of immortality that is to descend when the ideal world is realized—Tenrikyō established the Sweet Dew Stand (*kanrodai* 甘露台) at its headquarters (Takagi 1959, 28–31).

In Hitonomichi, founded in 1931 by Miki Tokuharu 御木徳一, it was taught that the founder could absorb the illnesses of believers into his own body and thereby cure any disease. Hitonomichi was thoroughly loyal to state ideology, to the extent of incorporating the Imperial Rescript on Education (Kyōiku chokugo 教育勅語) into its doctrine, yet paradoxically, because of this very allegiance, it was indicted for the crime of *lèse-majesté* and ordered to dissolve (Takagi 1959, 34–35). *Seichō no Ie* 生長の家 was founded in 1930 by Taniguchi Masaharu 谷口雅春, a former believer of Ōmoto-kyō 大本教, when he launched a magazine of the same name. The movement began its proselytization by advertising that reading its publications—*Seichō no Ie* 生長の家 (House of Growth) and *Seimei no jissō* 生命の真相 (Truth of Life)—could cure illness. The organization maintained a distinctive structure in which magazine subscribers, called *shiyū* 誌友, were regarded as adherents. Taniguchi asserted that all things in the world are manifestations shaped by life or by the divine wisdom of God, and since divine wisdom and human wisdom are originally one, humans, by means of the life, wisdom, and divine power inherent within themselves, could master objective realities such as

disease and thereby build a paradise on earth (Takagi 1959, 35–39).

Deguchi Nao 出口なお, the founder of Ōmoto-kyō 大本教, was originally a believer in Konkōkyō 金光教. Following incidents of madness involving her third daughter Hisa in 1890 and her eldest daughter Yone in 1891, she experienced divine possession in 1892 and began writing the *Ofudesaki*. In these revelations, Deguchi Nao proclaimed that in the present world ruled by evil and beasts, both the world and the human heart would undergo a great cleansing, and that a purified ideal world would unfold “where things are as transparent as crystal and the evil spirits have no place to hide.” In 1894, Nao became a teacher of Konkōkyō, and in 1897 she separated from it to establish her own religious organization. In 1900, Deguchi Onisaburō 出口王仁三郎, who had married Nao’s fifth daughter Sumi, became her *de facto* successor. After Nao’s death in 1918, Ōmoto-kyō experienced its first suppression in 1921 on charges of *lèse-majesté*; during this incident, its sanctuary and Nao’s tomb were destroyed on the grounds that they resembled imperial shrines and imperial mausolea. From that point onward, Onisaburō renounced Nao’s apocalyptic doctrine and began to espouse imperial nationalism. However, in 1935, Ōmoto-kyō faced a second suppression on charges of denying the Emperor, committing blasphemy through its reinterpretation of mythology, and preparing an organization to usurp the imperial throne (Yasumaru 2013, 218–219; Takagi 1959, 33–34).

Except for Ōmoto-kyō 大本教, which developed an apocalyptic critique of society, Japanese new religions tended to direct their focus inward rather than outward, placing greater emphasis on healing and purifying the individual body and mind. In contrast, in the new religions of colonial Korea, the founders’ conceptions of a spiritual paradise were often transformed into material and collective visions of paradise—ones that could satisfy the entire populace and be realized within a short period of time. That is, during the colonial period, the new religions of Korea often sought not the reform of the individual inner world but the complete transformation of the external world to establish a paradise on earth, thereby tending toward a religious and social revolutionary movement.⁹ Especially amid the internal and external turmoil

9. Cho Kyōngdal, in examining the influence of *Jeonggammok* on the formation of the people

of the late Joseon period and the colonial situation brought about by Japan's annexation of Korea, new religions in Korea often relied not only on spiritual techniques and miracles but also on prophetic texts such as *Jeonggamnok*, in developing movements aimed at constructing a paradise on earth. At that time, the new religions of Korea, in an effort to resolve the people's maladjustment to a rapidly changing world, reinterpreted the unstable present as a *religious transitional period*, and focused less on the inner world than on envisioning the apocalyptic landscape of the external world. Therefore, unlike those in Japan, the new religions of Korea were easily exposed to the sociopolitical repression of the Government-General of Korea.

In the early modern period, new religions often developed doctrines of worldly salvation centered on “healing illness, healing the mind, and correcting the world” (Shimazono 2020, 84–89). In Japan, Ōmoto-kyō, having placed particular emphasis on *correcting the world*, was successively suppressed and dissolved by the government in 1921 and 1935 on charges including lèse-majesté and violations of the Public Order Preservation Law. However, many new religions such as Tenrikyō, Hitonomichi, and Seichō no Ie, abandoned the goal of *correcting the world* and redirected their doctrinal focus toward healing the body and the mind. In other words, it can be said that they sought a paradise of the body and mind rather than an external paradise. In contrast, many new religions in colonial Korea—such as Cheongnimgyo, Baekbaekgyo, and Indogyo—pursued the ideal of correcting the world on the basis of the *Jeonggamnok* tradition, and were eventually subjected to suppression or forced dissolution. In this atmosphere, some new religions, such as Hwangsin jeguk daejeonggyo, emerged that arbitrarily interpreted *Jeonggamnok* to idealize the completion of the colonial order as the realization of a utopian world, while others, such as Taegeukdo, went so far as to reinterpret *Jeonggamnok* in modern terms and preach a paradise on earth grounded in material civilization. In this way, through the experiences of colonization and

as agents of transformation, distinguishes among the unique and singular True Human, the universal becoming of all people as True Humans, and the internalization of the concept of the True Human. However, this present study deals not with the True Human but solely with the internalization and externalization of the paradise on earth (Cho 2024, 152–153).

modernization, the external apocalypse depicted in *Jeonggamnok* was fragmented into diverse colonial and modernist landscapes. Thereafter, most new religions gradually revised their aims, turning from a cosmic eschatology to an inner eschatology, seeking to construct a paradise on earth through the renewal of the mind.

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