

**New Religions in Taiwan and Korea: A Comparative Study of Weixin Shengjiao (唯心聖教) and Daesoon Jinrihoe (大巡真理會)**

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**ABSTRACT:** Weixin Shengjiao in Taiwan and Daesoon Jinrihoe in Korea are among the new religions that emerged as part of a regional response to the political and cultural crisis that hit Eastern Asia in the 19th and 20th centuries. Japanese, Chinese, and Western imperialism were all factors determining instability and favoring the birth and success of new religions, although the activities of the new faiths were limited for decades by Japanese rule in Korea and Martial Law in Taiwan. The paper discusses how Weixin Shengjiao and Daesoon Jinrihoe both use I Ching and Feng Shui, and the idea of resolving ancient grievances dating back to the mythological history of early China, in order to promote regional and world peace, noting both similarities and differences between the two movements and their respective relations with the traditional Three Teachings (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism).

**KEYWORDS:** Weixin Shengjiao, Weixinism, Daesoon Jinrihoe, I Ching, Chinese Folk Religion, New Religions in Taiwan, New Religions in Korea.

*The 19<sup>th</sup> Century Political Crisis and the Emergence of East Asian New Religions*

East Asian countries encountered a sovereignty crisis in the second half of the 19th century under the impact of Western powers. The traditional culture of the Three Teachings (三教), i.e. Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism, was unable to resist the invasion of Western culture. The arrival of Christian missionaries, both Catholic and Protestant, converted some, but generated also a reaction in the shape of nationalistic new religions, which tried to revitalize the Three Teachings and create a national cultural consciousness (Chiu 2001). Although emphasizing notions of tradition and orthodoxy, the new religions did not simply repeat the main ideas of the traditional Three Teachings but somewhat reinterpreted them, while trying to show their practical relevance within the new cultural framework.

The Three Teachings are generally recognized, to this day, as a powerful tool for cultural and national identification in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Japan's and Korea's connections with the culture of the Three Teachings is comparatively well-known. Vietnam was one of the earliest countries to engage in cultural exchange with China. The teachings of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism entered Vietnam around the beginning of the Common Era. The Wu, Ding, and Li dynasties all implemented policies based on the Three Teachings. Vietnam's Caodaism, which advocates "unity of religions," is an example of a contemporary new religion based on the Three Teachings, as well as on Christianity and Western Esotericism.

The new religions born in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in East Asia presented themselves as forms of "Eastern learning," capable of resisting the foreign impact of Christianity, yet were also influenced by elements of Western culture and of Christianity itself. The formation of new religions continued throughout East Asia in the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, as each country tried to adapt to the new challenges of globalization while, at the same time, affirming its unique identity. This study examines two East Asian new religions born in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Taiwan's Weixin Shengjiao (唯心聖教) and South Korea's Daesoon Jinrihoe (大巡真理會), and discusses, with a comparative approach, how they became tools for governing the modernization and globalization processes while, at the same time, affirming and preserving an ethnic and national identity.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, Taiwan and South Korea were not only confronted with the impact of foreign cultures, but were also plagued by internecine conflict and contradiction. This double jeopardy is apparent in Taiwan, whose identity is continuously negotiated in a confrontation with China, the giant of East Asia. Taiwan is both influenced by contemporary Chinese culture and scared by the Chinese superpower from a political and military point of view. Korean identity, in turn, is shaped by the pains of the division into North and South Korea. Most Taiwanese and Korean new religions propose a discourse on world peace, at the same time emphasizing the unique contribution their countries may offer to a globalized world.

From a geographic perspective, Taiwan and South Korea are both located in East Asia, on the circum-Pacific belt and in the Chinese cultural sphere. Taiwan and South Korea exhibit several similarities in terms of history. Both were colonized by Japan, both saw their traditional culture impacted by Western

culture, both uphold liberalism and became friendly with the U.S., and both were influenced by the Three Teachings. Taiwanese and South Korean new religions also exhibit some similarities. In particular, Taiwan's Weixin Shengjiao and South Korea's Daesoon Jinrihoe are similar in that their use of the classics and religious practices are not only deeply influenced by the Three Teachings, but also apply to contemporary problems the ancient wisdom of the *I Ching* (易道) and its Eight Trigrams (八卦五行). Both are new religions formed from the revitalization of national traditions.

National identity is a complicated concept in Taiwan, due to the diversity of the island's ethnic groups. Historically, Taiwan was ruled by several foreign powers, and has always been involved in struggles between international forces. Zheng Chenggong (1624–1662), an adventurer of mixed Chinese and Japanese origins, conquered Taiwan from colonial Dutch rule in 1662. Shih Lang (1621–1696), an admiral who served under the Qing Dynasty, led Chinese forces to Taiwan in 1683 and made the island a part of the Qing empire. Western imperialists cast their covetous eyes on Taiwan in the mid-19th century, and Taiwan fell under Japanese control in 1895.

After fifty years of Japanese rule, the Chinese nationalist government, defeated by the Communists, retreated from China to Taiwan in 1949, and began the period of the Republic of China. Taiwan and China are inextricably linked culturally, but divided by great contradictions politically. Identification with cultural China does not equal identification with political China (see Huang 2006). This distinction is manifest in Taiwanese new religions, which inherit, combine, transform, and innovate Chinese culture, while isolating themselves from political China.

In an environment with so many diverse ethnic groups and cultures, Taiwan's Weixin Shengjiao proposes "Chinese cultural orthodoxy (中華文化道統) [through] the study of *I Ching* and Feng Shui (易經風水學)." However, the concept of "Chinese cultural orthodoxy" does not simply imply the return to traditional culture. Facing the modern world, Weixin Shengjiao developed a set of adjustment principles. What we may call its "integration" strategy not only combines the Three Teachings between themselves, but also applies the Way of Change of the *I Ching* (Book of Changes) to the same Three Teachings, and expands the definition of "ethnic group" referred to the Chinese. In the end, the entire East Asia is seen as one large "spiritual community," whose members have

a universal mission and can lead the world towards the peace of “the Eternal Bright Heaven (光明天).”

This study examines how Weixin Shengjiao reflects on features of modern Taiwanese society based on its interpretation and application of the Three Teachings and the *I Ching*. It also discusses new interpretations and applications of the Three Teachings and the *I Ching* by South Korea’s Daesoon Jinrihoe. A comparative study of the two movements is then proposed as a basis for understanding how new religions revitalize national identity in East Asia and transmit traditional Chinese culture. This study also examines how the two new religions reinterpret tradition in response to a new transnational “Chinese” consciousness, apply traditional national patterns to modern situations, and search for a place in the contemporary globalized world, while reaffirming their commitment to a religious East Asian “orthodoxy.”

*Contemporary East Asia, the End of Martial Law (解嚴) in Taiwan, and Weixin Shengjiao*

The modern history of East Asia cannot be understood without considering the immense pressure European and American countries seeking to develop capitalism exerted on the whole area. China signed in 1842 what most Chinese regard as the first of the “unfair treaties,” ceding land to the United Kingdom (including Hong Kong) and agreeing to pay heavy damages as compensation after the Opium War.

As a response to the “unfair treaties,” the “May Fourth Movement” started in China in 1919, under the impact of Western culture, modern science, and China’s own political failures. The movement sought to adopt a Westernization policy to strengthen the nation and thoroughly reinterpret China’s traditional culture. Science and reason brought by the Enlightenment challenged the way of thinking of traditional Chinese culture. Some Chinese scholars began to oppose long-established traditions under strong feelings of grief and indignation, and the movement also led to the development of modern Chinese patriotism and nationalism. “Saving the nation through science” became a popular slogan, while traditional Chinese preoccupations with religion and aesthetics were regarded as outmoded and lost their momentum. Religion, specifically, went through a process of “disenchantment.” Traditional techniques, such as the five arts and

divination, came to be gradually perceived as superstitions and were criticized and opposed.

The nationalist government lost the Chinese Civil War and retreated to Taiwan in 1949. Even though the government officially promoted Confucianism, in fact it merely used Confucian teachings as a tool to control public opinion. There was no real religious liberty during the period of Martial Law. The government did not tolerate new religions and also actively opposed folk religious practices such as divination and geomancy (堪輿) (Chou 2002).

Such folk beliefs, which form an integral part of several new religions, could not be freely propagated during the period of Martial Law. This explains why numerous new religions surfaced only after the end of Martial Law in 1987, when the religious groups could be formally registered with the Ministry of Internal Affairs and become legal organizations. Several of these religions were based on the Three Teachings, such as Sanyijiao 三一教 (Xiaijiao 夏教), Lijiao 理教, I-Kuan-Tao 一貫道, Xiantianjiao 先天救教 (The World Red Swastika Society 世界紅卍字會), Tiandeshengjiao 天德聖教, Xuanyuanjiao 軒轅教, Tienti Teachings 天帝教, and Maitreya Great Tao 彌勒大道. All these religions regarded themselves as the legitimate heirs to centuries of Chinese culture, but each religion developed its own new interpretations of the traditional heritage. Combinations of divination, Feng Shui, and folk beliefs with the Three Teachings became very popular. Some new religions also offered a new rationale for national identification.

The five arts, *I Ching*, divination, and Feng Shui have always been popular in Chinese societies, where there are numerous Feng Shui and numerology halls. As the foundation of folk beliefs and practices, the *I Ching* is the most important of China's traditional five classics. In addition to a philosophical view of the universe and an ethical discourse on the value of moral obligations, the book also contains predictions of the future, instructions on how to practice divination, and the fundamentals of the art of numbers (術數). Most modern scholars only praise *I Ching* for its philosophical and moral parts, but do not mention its prescriptions on divination and geomancy. However, divination and geomancy remained popular Chinese folk beliefs and never really disappeared. Taiwan successfully became a modernized society in a mere fifty years of rapid economic development, but folk beliefs and traditional crafts continued to hold an important position in the island.

According to the Surveys on Social Change in Taiwan by the Institute of Sociology of the Academia Sinica of 1985, 1990, and 1995, a growing number of Taiwanese used the art of numbers, especially since 1990. The national education system based on science and reason did not entirely supersede the use of the art of numbers. In fact, fortune-telling and Feng Shui became increasingly popular. Folk beliefs and folklorized Buddhism were at the core of most of religions in Taiwan (Chiu 2006, 258–291). The nationalist government remained consistently hostile towards the art of numbers and folk beliefs during the period of Martial Law. After the end of Martial Law, however, new religions flourished and showed how folk beliefs had never been truly eradicated.

At the same time, the ruling party, the Kuomintang, proclaimed that Taiwan had the responsibility of acting as a spiritual fortress for “revitalizing Chinese culture.” After the Cultural Revolution in China (1966–1976), Taiwan was presented as the only surviving heir of genuine Chinese culture. The concept of a “Chinese cultural orthodoxy,” which Mainland China had lost with the Cultural Revolution but was preserved in Taiwan, was deeply embedded in the hearts of the Taiwanese by the educational institutions of the party-state system.

The concept of orthodoxy was also manifest in the teachings and practices of new religions. New religions were given more freedom to grow after the end of Martial Law, but they had to conform to the prevailing official discourse on orthodoxy and “revitalizing Chinese culture.” They gained political legitimacy and were coopted as part of the party-state system and of “Chinese cultural orthodoxy.” Although the government was pursuing its own political aims, the new religions seized the opportunity to be recognized as part of the mainstream, and to assert their identity and cultural value amongst the contradictions between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait.

The rise of Taiwan’s Weixin Shengjiao can be described as one example of the “institutionalization” of diffused folk beliefs. New religions are often based on folk beliefs, which they turn into a systematic, organized religion (Yang [1961] 2016). Weixin Shengjiao is a new religion that integrates the Three Teachings with folk beliefs. It was founded by Grand Master Hun Yuan (混元禪師) in the 1980s, and became the 28th religious group registered with the Ministry of the Interior in Taiwan. The religion’s headquarters are at the Hsien Fo Temple on Chan Chi Mountain (禪機山仙佛寺), located in Fuguei Township, Nantou County, in Central Taiwan.

Grand Master Hun Yuan (1944–) was born as Chang Yi-Jui in a poor village in Zhongliao Township, Nantou County, and graduated from the Land Survey Department of Kuang-Hwa Senior Industrial Vocational High School. He continued as a teacher in his parent school and later founded the first land survey company in Taiwan, which specialized in urban planning, road development, and land survey work for the government. He was greatly interested in divination, the *I Ching*, Feng Shui, and geomancy, and continued to study traditional Chinese arts. He became severely ill in 1983, and began his path of religious practice. At first, he opened a family hall for worshipping Buddha, and used divination to resolve the problems of his neighbors. In 1989, he built the religion's headquarters, the Hsien Fo Temple, where he offered courses on the combined study of *I Ching* and Feng Shui and used Buddhist rituals to remove ill fortunes and offer blessings.

According to internal data of the religion, in 2016, Weixin Shengjiao had 41 branch temples and temples and 27 classrooms to propagate its teachings around Taiwan, as well as 8 overseas branch temples. The religion built the Eight Trigrams Town (八卦城) in Yunmeng Mountain (雲夢山) in Henan, China covering 720 thousand square meters, as well as three ancestral halls devoted to the three Chinese ancestors Huangdi, Yandi, and Chiyou in a different Chinese province, Hebei. As of 2017, Weixin Shengjiao has some 300,000 believers around the world. It is legally incorporated in the form of a foundation. Its university, Weixin Shengjiao College (唯心聖教學院), has been accredited by the Ministry of Education of Taiwan. The college's goal is to become the first college in the world specialized in the study of *I Ching* and Feng Shui.

Weixin Shengjiao established its own TV channel, Weixin TV, in 2003 and broadcasts Feng Shui programs 24 hours a day. It also established a new channel to broadcast news of the religious group, as well as an online platform for users to learn about *I Ching* and Feng Shui, free of charge, an example of how modern technology is used to propagate traditional beliefs. Clergy positions in the religion include master (法師), lecturer (講師), chanter (誦經師), and preacher (弘化師). A traditional diffused belief in the art of numbers became fully organized into an institutionalized religious group.

The main deity of Weixin Shengjiao is Guiguzi (鬼谷子). He is a historical figure, traditionally regarded in China as the originator of the School of Political Strategists during the Warring States Period. In folk beliefs, he has been

divinized as Wang Chan Lao Chu (王禪老祖). The historical Guiguzi is believed to have been proficient in astronomy, the art of numbers, pre-Qin-Dynasty scholarly thought, and to have possessed psychic powers.

Weixin Shengjiao combines the art of numbers, whose teaching is traditionally attributed to Guiguzi, the *I Ching*, divination, and the Three Teachings, and also integrates elements of folk beliefs. to create a contemporary form of “Chinese cultural orthodoxy.” It teaches that “*I Ching* is the lineage of Dao, while Feng Shui is culture” (Hun Yuan 2016, 137). Therefore, the Chinese cultural orthodoxy proposed by Weixin Shengjiao is centered on the study of *I Ching* and Feng Shui.

### *The Three Teachings and the Way of Change*

Weixin Shengjiao’s scriptures include several Chinese classics of the Three Teachings, which are incorporated into its doctrinal system. There are also sutras believed to have been revealed by the main deity, Wang Chan Lao Chu (Guiguzi), forming the religion’s own *Revelation Sutra* (天啟經典). The classics deriving from the Three Teachings and the *Revelation Sutra* form the system of “the 30 Weixin scriptures” (唯心三十經) (see Chang 2014). The style and core teachings come from Buddhism and Taoism, and the verses for the opening sutras are mostly quotes from Buddhist scriptures or Taoist incantations. A new *Revelation Sutra* is revealed (出世) every one or two years. The fact that new sutras are constantly being revealed shows that the religious doctrine is still being developed and subject to change.

In the 30 Weixin scriptures of Weixin Shengjiao, there are six Buddhist classics, two Confucian classics, and seven classics from folk beliefs. There are also 16 *Revelation Sutras* created by the religion. Of the classics from the Three Teachings, Buddhist classics are the more frequently recited and taught. During its early period, before it became an independent religion, Weixin Shengjiao was registered as “Buddhist” in the “religions” category of the Ministry of the Interior, showing that, among the Three Teachings, it was more inclined towards Buddhism.

Buddhist terms and notions are common in Weixin Shengjiao and can be regarded as the basis of its philosophy and teachings. Buddhist concepts of



“cause (因) and effect (果),” “incarnation (輪迴),” and “merit (功德)” are common in the 30 Weixin scriptures. Grand Master Hun Yuan mainly taught the “Four Noble Truths (四聖諦),” “Eight Noble Paths (八正道),” “Twelve Nidānas (十二因緣),” and the *Heart Sutra* when propagating the religion at first, and this Buddhist template offered an opportunity to formulate his own religious thoughts (Huang 2002).

The Buddhist sutras recited by Weixin Shengjiao, including the *Amitabha Sutra*, *Medicine Buddha Sutra*, *Sutra of the Fundamental Vows of the Bodhisattva Kṣitigarbha*, *Lotus Sutra*, and *Diamond Sutra*, are all commonly recited sutras in Chinese societies. That these sutras were adopted by Weixin Shengjiao confirms that the religion always combined Buddhist teachings with folk beliefs. Reciting Buddhist sutras is the daily homework of believers, and an important part of their religious assemblies. The religion teaches that those who recite sutras can gain merit, change their fate, and return merit to their ancestors and all living beings, benefiting both the dead and the living.

Weixin Shengjiao boasts that it has integrated into its system the main classics of the Three Teachings. However, the classics included in the Taoist canon *Daozang* 道藏 are nowhere to be found. Seven classics derive from folk beliefs, including the *Wang Chan Lao Chu Mantra Sutra* 王禪老祖玄妙真經, *The Perfected Scripture of the Jade* 玉皇真經, *The Arch and the Primordial Heavenly Worthy of Shennong and Wugu Sutra* 元始天說神農五穀真經. All these are popular sutras in Taiwan’s folk religion, and even though their contents integrate the Three Teachings, their fundamental religious framework is Taoist. Yet, aside from the *Wang Chan Lao Chu Mantra Sutra*, these folk sutras are rarely recited and mentioned in Weixin Shengjiao. They are used in certain stages of the movement’s religious missions, but are not recited as constantly as the Buddhist sutras.

The Taoist teachings of Weixin Shengjiao are inherited from folk beliefs. Folk beliefs are different from Taoism, but have always been closely related. One can say that Taoism has always been the religious system of the Chinese common people. Taoist thought is the “cultural gene pool” of China (Schipper 2002), widely spread in the daily life, and the sutras of folk beliefs are a natural reflect of Taoism. In fact, Weixin Shengjiao absorbed the cultural spirit of Taoism from folk beliefs.

In addition to the classics system of the 30 Weixin scriptures, Weixin Shengjiao compiled its teachings into a set originally consisting of 15,615 books, the *Weixin's Dao Zang* (唯心道藏). There is no specific style of writing for these books, which document verbatim the lectures and teachings of Grand Master Hun Yuan on TV, in various occasions, and in classrooms.

After the *Weixin's Dao Zang* was completed with 15,615 books (although new books are now added), “petitions were presented to Heaven (稟天)” in ten “open-book religious assemblies” over a period of six months in year 2015. In other words, these books were presented to Heaven and became sacred through specific ceremonies. A ritual of transmitting the *Weixin's Dao Zang* was then held, allowing members to personally participate in the preservation process, using their own hands to place the 15,615 books into the sacred spaces of 10 branch temples around Taiwan, thus making the *Weixin's Dao Zang* a sacred object both spiritually and materially. Revealing the *Weixin's Dao Zang* consolidated the authority of Grand Master Hun Yuan's interpretation of the Three Teachings, and the ritual of transmitting the *Weixin's Dao Zang* emphasized its sacredness. The position of *Weixin's Dao Zang*, which is a compilation of the teachings of Grand Master Hun Yuan, in Weixin Shengjiao gradually overtook the 30 Weixin scriptures, which contain the Three Teachings. This confirms the centrality of Grand Master Hun Yuan's own teachings in the religion.

In the list of deities of Weixin Shengjiao, Guiguzi (鬼谷子) is the main deity, with a lineage (法脈) tracing him back to figures of mythological Chinese history such as Fuxi 伏羲, the Goddess of Nine Heavens 九天玄女, and the Three Chinese Ancestors 中華三祖 (Huangdi 黃帝, Yandi 炎帝, and Chiyu 蚩尤). Guiguzi, as the embodiment of Wang Chan Lao Chu (王禪老祖), is regarded as the divine being unifying the methods of Dao (道法). In Weixin Shengjiao's pantheon, he takes his place at the center, surrounded by 33 celestial kings and 72 celestial masters (天師) as his guardians. Grand Master Hun Yuan is the spokesperson for Wang Chan Lao Chu/Guiguzi on Earth, and is mysteriously united with Wang Chan Lao Chu.



Figure 1. The pantheon of Weixin Shengjiao, with Guiguzi at its centre.

Even though some doctrines are derived from the Three Teachings, the list of deities is mainly based on Chinese mythology and historical figures. Fuxi and the Goddess of Nine Heavens are both characters from Chinese mythology, where Fuxi drew the eight trigrams of the Pre-World (先天). The Goddess of Nine Heavens was regarded as the goddess of the Pre-World by Taoists. Weixin Shengjiao considers the Goddess of Nine Heavens as the ancestor of the nine arts and eight trigrams in the Later World (後天). The 33 celestial kings and 72 celestial masters in the surrounding space are unique to Weixin Shengjiao and are based on its interpretation of the trigrams of the *I Ching*, which are regarded as divine in their essence.

It is worth noting that all three traditional Chinese ancestors (Huangdi, Yandi, and Chiyou) are also listed. Worshiping Yandi and Huangdi is symbolic of being “descendants of Yan and Huang” (炎黃子孫) and inheriting Chinese culture, but

why is the infamous Chiyou, a quintessential villain in Chinese mythology, among their ranks? Weixin Shengjiao believes that Chiyou is the ancestor of ethnic minorities in China, and other ethnic groups can only be truly integrated into one community by recognizing Chiyou as a Chinese ancestor.

Weixin Shengjiao holds large ancestor worship ceremonies to recognize the historical status of Chiyou as a national ancestor. In 2004, the movement began holding the 21st Century Chinese Joint Ancestor Worship Ceremony (中華民族聯合祭祖大典) in Linkou Stadium, in Taoyuan City near Taipei. This is a major event for ancestral worship, and is also a feast and a show that mobilizes over 30,000 members of the religious group, politicians and businessmen from around the world, as well as representatives of other Chinese religions. Grand Master Hun Yuan propagates the concept of the “three Chinese ancestors” through this event, listing Chiyou as equal to Yandi and Huangdi, and giving him the title of “Humans’ and Civilizations’ First Ancestor.” Such a large assembly operates as an agenda-setting event for the religious group, allowing the status of Chiyou to be recognized. The “three Chinese ancestors” have thus become a key lineage in Weixin Shengjiao.

As revisited by Weixin Shengjiao, Chinese mythology teaches that, after Chiyou was defeated and killed in the Battle of Zhuolu, his people was scattered south to Yunnan and Gueizhou, to become the ancestors of the Miao people, north to Korea, to become the ancestors of the Korean people, and west to Mongolia (Huang 2009, 126–127). Weixin Shengjiao refers to this mythical history to claim that the Korean civilization originated from the people of Chiyou. Furthermore, based on the traditional texts *Basic Annals of Qin* and *Biographies of the Kings of Huainan and Hengshan*, part of the *Records of the Grand Historian*, Weixin Shengjiao recognizes a blood relation and cultural connection between the first Japanese ruler, Emperor Jimmu, and Qin Dynasty’s Xufu (or Fu Xu), who crossed the ocean to Japan. Xufu is believed to be the reincarnation of Guiguzi (鬼谷子). The lineage revealed by the list of deities, thus, covers East Asian nationalities, including them into the system of the three Chinese ancestors.

During the era of imperial China, pre-Qin classics maintained that “the great affairs of a state are sacrifice and war,” indicating that the grievances of the spirits of those deceased in the unavoidable wars between the states could only be resolved through sacrifice. The East Asian countries located in the Chinese

cultural circle have engaged in exchange, cooperation, competition, submission, and war throughout history, and grudges between nations have accumulated in the process. From the perspective of the Divine Dao (神道) of Weixin Shengjiao, these grievances in the history of East Asia originate from the three Chinese ancestors. Weixin Shengjiao believes that it must go back to the three ancestors to resolve the grievances through the Divine Dao.

Several new religions in Taiwan combine beliefs in Maitreya 彌勒佛 and the Eternal Venerable Mother 無生老母, following the tradition of the religious sects that were separated from Bailianjiao 白蓮教 between the late Ming Dynasty and the early Qing Dynasty, such as Xiantian dao 先天道, Qinglianjiao 青蓮教, and the Taiwanese branch of I-Kuan-Tao. Weixin Shengjiao did not follow this tradition and made Guiguzi the center of its *I Ching*-based religion. Guiguzi was originally a “trade deity” in the beliefs of the Han people, and was responsible for the art of numbers, including fortune telling, divination, and Feng Shui.

As mentioned earlier, Surveys on Social Change in Taiwan prove that the art of numbers is becoming increasingly popular in the island. Scholars believe that tensions in the social structure resulted in a diffused feeling of uncertainty, inducing many to look to the art of numbers for a solution (Chiu 2006, 262). However, this sense of uncertainty does not seem to be a sufficient explanation for the success of Weixin Shengjiao and, more specifically, for the popularity that was rapidly achieved by its cult of Guiguzi. The cult predates Weixin Shengjiao, but in Grand Master Hun Yuan’s teachings Guiguzi far exceeds the confines of a trade deity, and descends into the world as the enlightened promoter of Chinese culture. Guiguzi’s centrality is apparent from Weixin Shengjiao’s list of deities and the inclusion of the three Chinese ancestors, combining the lineages of the *I Ching*, Feng Shui, and national ancestors within the framework of the method of Dao. *I Ching*’s Way of Change is used as a tool to expand the sacred spaces and incorporate several heavenly deities into a well-ordered pantheon.

The *I Ching* always had two dimensions as a Confucian classic, one philosophical and one connected with divination. Weixin Shengjiao emphasizes “the usage of *I Ching* (用易)” with respect to divination as more important than “the theory of *I Ching* (易學).” The religion also believes that it is actually expanding the application of *I Ching* with respect to Confucianism. “Confucius learned and taught *I Ching*, while Guiguzi Wang Chan Lao Chu studied and used *I Ching* (...), creating the culture and civilization of the present and the future”

(Hun Yuan 2016, 40).

Weixin Shengjiao uses *I Ching* for divination and geomancy, at the same time believing that the text allows to “study the relationship between Heaven and humans.” Grand Master Hun Yuan also embraces the principles on universal social order of the Confucian classic *The Chapter of Great Harmony*, but explains Confucian concepts such as the four anchors and eight virtues through the relationships between the trigrams of *I Ching*.

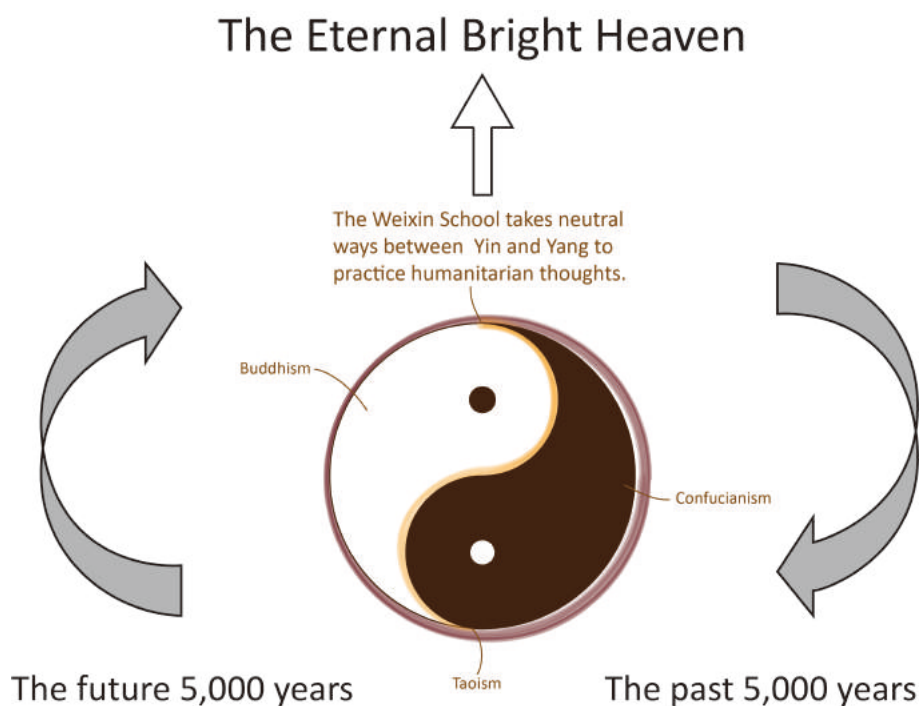
A scripture that is part of Weixin Shengjiao’s canon, the *Feng Shui Sutra* (風水真經), points out that “Feng Shui is the only way to understand emptiness and form in Buddhism. Feng is emptiness and Shui is form.” “Faith in the profound Feng Shui of the universe will build a pure land of Buddhism in the world of man.” If humans would understand that Feng Shui is the Dharma realm, it would not be hard to transcend the three realms and realize enlightenment” (Hun Yuan [2005] 2013, 31). The *I Ching* and Feng Shui are regarded by the movement as two sides of the same coin. Feng Shui is considered a manifestation of the *I Ching*’s Way of Change, and Weixin Shengjiao claims that following the principles of Feng Shui would allow this world to become a pure land for Buddha. In Feng Shui, there are so called “caves,” where the essence of a mountain’s *qi* is believed to be located. Weixin Shengjiao believes that the Kunlun Mountain Range in China extends to Taiwan and forms one such “cave,” over which is the realm of the sacred “South Heaven.” The mystical influence of this “cave” allowed the Chinese cultural orthodoxy to take root and grow in Taiwan.

Another of the religion’s scriptures, the *Sutra of the Weixin Heart Calmness* (安心真經), clearly states that the Way of Change is the being of the universe and is the first and utmost principle. Weixin Shengjiao is presented as the heir to the Way of Change. Mastering the Way of Change is declared the key to becoming a Buddha. The Sutra claims that Weixin Shengjiao integrates the Three Teachings into the Way of Change, thus incorporating five thousand years of Chinese cultural orthodoxy into a new world religion.

According to Weixin Shengjiao, “any ‘school,’ whether it may belong to Buddhism, Taoism or Confucianism cannot be separated from the *I Ching*” and “the *I Ching* contains all Dharma” (Hun Yuan 2016, 52). Not only does Weixin Shengjiao combine the Three Teachings and the Way of Change, it also offers new interpretations. Weixin Shengjiao uses the traditional Tai Chi Tu (太極圖)

diagram to interpret the development process of the Three Teachings. Buddhism represents world-transcending dharma and is on the Yang side of Tai Chi, which is also related to “emptiness.” Confucianism represents worldly dharma and is on the Yin side of Tai Chi, also representing “form.” Taoism is the origin of “Dao.” The Three Teachings jointly develop upwards and finally enter the last and highest stage, “Weixin School (唯心家).” The Middle Path between Ying and Yang is the Way of Change, where the Weixin School operates for the benefit of humanity.

As represented by the circular lines of the Tai Chi Tu, the past 5,000 years are the dark world of “Yin.” Weixin Shengjiao is currently propagating Feng Shui and the *I Ching* along the Way of Change to reform the world and usher it into the Eternal Bright Heaven of “Yang,” continuously ascending to transcend the cycle of Yin and Yang and never returning to the world of Yin. This course of development is called the return of the Numbers to Pneuma (象), where Xiang returns to Shu (數) and Shu returns to Chi (炁), and then returns to perfect Pneuma (真炁) or Light (Hun Yuan 2016, 28). Hence, the final stage of development of the Three Teachings is “the Eternal Bright Heaven,” where eternal light and peace lie.



**Figure 2.** The Path to the Eternal Bright Heaven.

Weixin Shengjiao's notion of the Way of Change is not only manifest in its list of deities, including the three Chinese ancestors, and its approach to the Chinese cultural orthodoxy: it also governs its rituals. Weixin Shengjiao commonly adopts Buddhist rituals for religious assemblies, claiming they are able to rescue and relieve ghosts from suffering (超渡怨靈), transfer merit to the living, and obtain blessing and protection. However, when confronted with the natural and artificial disasters of our time, Weixin Shengjiao created a new ritual for "ridding calamities and eliminating disasters," based on the *I Ching* and using the eight trigrams to arrange a worship space where sutras are continuously recited. This new ritual was used to deal with global disasters such as the SARS epidemic, the ozone hole, the risk of volcanic eruptions at Fuji Mountain and at Yellowstone National Park, and the "sinkholes" that frequently occurred in China, the U.S., and Russia in 2010. Weixin Shengjiao refers to these disasters as "the war between human beings and nature" and claim that they must be resolved through "morality."

The *I Ching* and Feng Shui attach great importance to mountains, landforms, and their origins. This is the root of Weixin Shengjiao's concern for the environment. The religion views the world as a whole, and believes that ridding calamities and eliminating disasters under the Way of Change must be carried out from a global perspective. The Way of Change is seen as dealing with both environmental and political problems, including cross-Strait disputes between Mainland China and Taiwan and the problems of globalization.

### *The Three Teachings and the Way of Change in South Korea's Daesoon Jinrihoe*

Daesoon Jinrihoe is one branch of the South Korean new religion Jeungsangyo, or Jeungsanism, in fact the most successful of all its branches. Its headquarters are in Yeosu, South Korea. According to data from 2010, the religion has 3,000 assembly halls around the country with 50,000 members of the clergy and 800,000 believers, making it the sixth largest religion in South Korea (Graduate Institute of Daesoon Theology 2012, 348).

The founder of Jeungsangyo was Kang Jeungsan (姜甌山) (1871–1909), born during the turmoil of late Joseon Dynasty. Korea went through the Japanese invasions that started in the 17th century, the invasion of Western forces, development of industry and commerce, and rapid social changes, all phenomena



that threatened its national security. A corrupted form of Confucianism deviated and oppressed the prevailing Korean thought, making life particularly difficult for the poorer classes. In the consequent social unrest, new religions appeared one after another due to the unease of the people and their longing for a better future, including the beliefs in an imminent coming of Maitreya and Donghak (Eastern Learning), both popular during the late Joseon Dynasty (Jin 2006, 3). The Donghak Peasant Revolution of 1894, an offshoot of the Donghak new religion founded in 1860, was the largest Joseon social movement. Donghak used “Eastern Learning” to oppose “Western Learning,” i.e. Christianity, becoming one of the first Korean new religions, with a profound influence on the renaissance (開闢) of a new Korean thought. Kang Jeungsan was also interested in Donghak for a while, but after the Donghak Revolution failed, he taught that human beings alone would not be able to change the world without the help of divine spirits and appropriate rituals and incantations.

After Kang Jeungsan died, Doju (道主) Jo Jeongsan (趙哲濟) (1895–1958) received a revelation from the deceased leader and established Mugeukdo, later passing his lineage to Dojeon (都典) Park Hangyeong (Park Wudang, 朴漢慶) (1917–1995 according to the lunar calendar, or 1918–1996 according to the solar calendar). Park founded Daesoon Jinrihoe in 1969, and actively engaged in charity, social welfare, and education.

*Jeonkyeong*, the sutra of Daesoon Jinrihoe, is a record of the deeds of the Lord of the Ninth Heaven (九天上帝), whom the religion believes to have incarnated on Earth as Kang Jeungsan, and contains the teachings of the religion compiled by Dojeon Park Wudang. The earliest record of Kang Jeungsan was in the *Record of Kang Jeungsan* published by Lee Sangho (1888–1967) in 1926. The *Daesoon Jeonkyeong* was first published in 1929, and the sixth edition of *Daesoon Jeonkyeong* was published in 1965 (Lee and Ko 2012).

Even though both Kang Jeungsan and Park Wudang were familiar with the Confucian classics, the latter were not included in the sutra system of Daesoon Jinrihoe. The only sutra of Daesoon Jinrihoe is the *Daesoon Jeonkyeong*. It is worth noting that the *Daesoon Jeonkyeong* has a similar writing style to the Bible of Christianity.

Kang Jeungsan was deified into the Lord of the Ninth Heaven (Kangseong Sangje, 姜聖上帝), and Jo Jeongsan (Doju) was deified into the Jade Emperor (玉皇

上帝). Some branches of Daesoon Jinrihoe (but not the main branch) also deified Park Wudang (Dojeon) into MireukSejon, or Maitreya. The founders of Daesoon Jinrihoe were deified and “unified” with preexisting heavenly deities, who “descended into the mundane world (倒裝下凡)” or returned there, giving them the qualities of the Messiah.

The Three Teachings as presented by Daesoon Jinrihoe are closely related to the Buddhist religion of Korea. The movement believes that, after the Great Itineration throughout the Three Realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind (環視三界、大巡天下), the Lord of the Ninth Heaven descended into the giant statue of Maitreya in the Buddhist Geumsansa Temple (金山寺). This may also be interpreted as a metaphorical statement, implying that traditional Buddhism was no longer capable of shouldering the great responsibility for the new world. This responsibility was given by the Lord of the Ninth Heaven to Choe Suwoon (Choe Je-u, 1824–1864), the founder of Donghak. After Choe Suwoon failed in his mission, the Lord of the Ninth Heaven took back from him the responsibility for the religion and the world’s fate, and personally descended into the world, incarnating as Kang Jeungsan.

The Korean monarchy ruled the nation with Confucianism and upheld the political principles of the great Confucian thinker Zhu Xi (1130–1200), using them as the norm for all society. Even though political Confucianism was corrupted, Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that Kang Jeungsan succeeded in reestablishing an orthodox Confucianism. He was familiar with the works of Zhu Xi. Dojeon Park Wudang also instructed his followers to collect and study Chinese classics. Confucian classics, including *Chou-I* and *The Great Learning*, are often quoted in the *Daesoon Jeonkyeong*. Tai-chi and the Tai Chi Tu diagram are also mentioned in several parts of the *Jeonkyeong*, showing that the Way of Change is the origin of the religion’s view of the universe and religious beliefs. The main moral tenets in the teaching of Daesoon Jinrihoe, sincerity, reverence, and faithfulness (誠、敬、信), are also in accordance with the spirit of Confucianism.

There is also a considerable amount of Taoist elements in the *Jeonkyeong*, including deity names, Taoist concepts, and references to the method of Dao. Taoist incantations such as the *Incantation for Lord Tai Yi*, appears to have been influential on Daesoon Jinrihoe’s own incantations. Also, the *Hyun-Mu Sutra* (玄武經) in the *Jeonkyeong* seems to be closely connected to Taoism. Huo Ke-Gong

emphasizes that the purpose of Daesoon Jinrihoe is the “creative conjunction of the virtues of Yin and Yang, harmonious union of divine beings and human beings, resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of all life, and realization and completion of the Dao in the world (陰陽合德、神人調化、解冤相生、道通真境),” in which “Yin and Yang” contain the concept of Taoism (in Huo and Jin 2012, 342–343). While Huo believes that Daesoon Jinrihoe “originated from Taoism,” Daesoon Jinrihoe scholar Maria Park listed several differences in the thoughts and teachings of Daesoon Jinrihoe and Taoism from the perspective of religious practice, belief, etiquette, and aesthetics (Park 2012, 238–257). This confirms that, even though new religions try to absorb the essence of traditional religions, they reinterpret it through transformation and innovation and create new spiritual paths.

In this sense, Daesoon Jinrihoe absorbed the Three Teachings but, as the religion seeks to find its own way to maturity, it becomes clear that the Three Teachings are not its ultimate path. Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism in their essence are called “the Three Ways” in Daesoon Jinrihoe, a concept regarded as even closer to the essence of East Asian culture than the notion of the Three Teachings (Lee 2014, 127–128). According to Daesoon Jinrihoe, these three ways do not have the same function, nor do they have equal status. Instead, each has a mission connected to a different stage. The *Jeonkyeong* (3:39) states: “Buddhism is the truth of forms, immortality [Taoism] is the truth of nature, and Confucianism is the truth of etiquette,” thus describing the function of each way. The order of the Three Ways is in turn indicated in the “12 Growth Phases (十二長生).”

The image of the “12 Growth Phases” symbolizes the course of life in Chinese numerology, i.e. the symbolic system of birth, aging and death, and is also an analogy applicable to all things, which pass through the stages of creation, development, decline, and death. The 12 Growth Phases are Tai (胎), Yang (養), Changsheng (長生), Muyu (沐浴), Guandai (冠帶), Linguan (臨官), Diwang (帝旺), Cui (衰), Bing (病), Si (死), Mu (墓), and Jue (絕). The Way of Immortality is located in the “Tai (胎)” phase, i.e. in the merging of Yin and Yang into the initial stage of the “embryo,” when everything is new, and there is new hope, unlimited vitality, and infinite possibilities for development. The phase is however also unstable and uncertain (Li 2002, 159).

In Daesoon Jinrihoe’s thoughts, Buddhism is believed to be located in the

“Yang” and “Changsheng” phases. “Yang” here is the process from embryo to infant, when all things begin to grow. “Changsheng” is the stage in which human beings are first born, full of life and vitality. Confucianism is located in the “Muyu” and “Guandai” phases, the stages of growth from infants to young adults. Daesoon Jinrihoe itself is located in the mature phases of “Linguan” and “Diwang.” Lee Gyung-Won believes that this is consistent with the time sequence in which the Three Ways appeared in history: “The Way of Immortality appeared first, then Buddhism, and then Confucianism, with the fate of humanity developing as well. Next was the era of human beings, opening a path to the everlasting Later World (後天開闢), with the essence of traditional religious culture emerging, reaching harmony, and being unified (...) into a state of maturity” (Lee 2014, 128). Daesoon Jinrihoe claims to be a religion emerging in the maturity of history, fully developing the Three Ways and ushering in the everlasting Later World.

In the *Jeonkyeong*, the *I Ching* is applied in “the reordering of the universe (天地公事),” which proceeds from the “Divine Dao” to fundamentally resolve all problems among both gods and human beings. The reordering of the universe is carried out by “correcting the numbers of cosmic cycles (整理天地度數), adjusting the deities (調化神明), and resolving grievances” (*Jeonkyeong* 3:1). The reordering of the universe can be roughly divided into three categories. The first is the “reordering of theocracy,” i.e. the solution of grudges between deities to unify them and finally collect and unify the earth’s energy and assure harmony and stability in the world of deities. The second is the “reordering of social changes,” i.e. solving the problems created by injustices in the world of human beings, especially in the history of Korea. This work would bring Korea from the dark Pre-World, or the world of “Yin,” into the bright Later World, or the world of “Yang,” opening up the heavenly Later World. The third work is the “reordering of teachings,” with reference to the disciples divided into many religious groups after the death of Kang Jeung-san. Kang himself predicted that one true heir would appear to propagate his teachings, and the movement interprets the prediction as referred to both Jo Jeung-san and the fact that Daesoon Jinrihoe would eventually become one of the largest religions in the world (Jin 2006, 258–260).

Thus, the reordering of the universe in the *Jeonkyeong* applies principles of China’s ancient Way of Change, including the eight trigrams of the Pre-World of Fuxi and the eight trigrams of the Later World of King Wen of Zhou. They are

used to correct the numbers of cosmic cycles, adjust Yin and Yang, and resolve grievances tracing their origins back to the son of China's ancient emperor Yao—the so-called grievance of Danzhu (丹朱). This concept of resolving grievances by going back to their origin is also found in Taiwan's Weixin Shengjiao, and demonstrates the intertwining histories of East Asian countries.

Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that Kang Jeungsan used the Divine Dao to change the world on a global scale, first directing his attention to the relationship between Korea, Japan and China. He used the Divine Dao to help Japan defeat Russia, viewing East Asia as a whole and supporting its effort to resist Western forces. He then slowly diverted his energy from Japan to Korea and helped Korea become prosperous, by transferring there the goddess Huangji, with the ultimate aim of uniting in Korea the religions not only of East Asia, but of the entire world. This reordering of the universe by applying the Way of Change was aimed at creating a new world or “earthly paradise (地上天國).” Korean spirituality, according to Daesoon Jinrihoe, created an entirely new concept, of “opening a path to the everlasting Later World,” i.e. ushering in a new world without oppression, upholding ethics and morality, and avoiding self-deception.

The concept of “opening a path to the everlasting Later World” was given new meaning by Daesoon Jinrihoe, but is a very important concept in Korean religions in general. Its Daesoon Jinrihoe version is based on the historical view and religious experience of Kang Jeungsan, Jo Jeongsan, and Park Wudang, differentiating between a Pre-World and a Later World, with a transition happening at a specific point in time. The conflicts that occurred in the Pre-World caused oppositions and grudges between humans and all beings in the world, disturbing the realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity and causing all sorts of calamities. The reordering of the universe carried out by Kang Jeungsan by correcting the numbers of cosmic cycles, resolving grievances, and opening up the three realms would eventually transform the world into the Later World of mutual benevolence.

The Pre-World and Later World referred to here are not the same as the positions of the eight trigrams for the Pre-World and Later World in the Chinese *I Ching* or its Korean version. Pre-World and Later World in Daesoon Jinrihoe are rather historical concepts (Chan 2014, 95). Kang Jeungsan believed that the old era was dominated by the energy of mutual restrictions, and people held grudges against each other, causing constant calamities. There were even

grudges in the realm of deities. These contradictions could only be resolved through the reordering of the universe by “opening up the three realms,” thus entering the Later World and establishing mutual benevolence.

In fact, the Way of Change has two dimensions in the reordering of the universe of Daesoon Jinrihoe. One is the application of the eight trigrams of the *I Ching* for correcting the numbers of cosmic cycles and supporting Divine Dao. The other is the transition from Pre-World to Later World. The idea of mutual benevolence relates to a “restriction of trigrams,” transforming the fate of Korean people. This provides an explanation for the survival of Korea and rationalizes its sufferings by providing Koreans with the vision of a beautiful future. After the application of the *I Ching* to Korea, the Way of Change is reinterpreted to affirm its innovative national spirit.

### *Conclusion*

New religions are often able to distinguish themselves from mainline traditions because the issues they seek to resolve are unprecedented. Weixin Shengjiao and Daesoon Jinrihoe claim to offer solutions to a problem not directly addressed by mainline religions, i.e. resolving grievances dating back to Chiyu, Danzhu, and the confrontation between Eastern and Western cultures. The Three Teachings, or Three Ways, are applied to promote religious practices presented as more adequate to the spirit of modern times. Weixin Shengjiao claims that it “integrates the thought of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism,” and the *Jeonkyeong* of Daesoon Jinrihoe states that “the Supreme God led all deities with the power of the way and the deities of civilization, and unified the essence of all national cultures.”

Even though both religions insist on the integration of the Three Teachings (together with folk beliefs), they emphasize different aspects and have their own preferences. In fact, they do not comprehensively accept the Three Teachings. Both religions absorb, critically judge, adapt, and transform the Three Teachings, claiming to be able to extract their essence and integrate it into an optimal state of harmony. Additionally, the Three Teachings are used as a tool to rediscover the national spirit and solve the double jeopardy of nations and ethnic groups.

National religions do not necessarily refuse to become “world religions.” In an

era of globalization, it is hard for religious groups to stay within their own closed world, as they must constantly respond to new situations arising in the world. The two national religions discussed in this article have self-expectations to become world religions, engaged in solving the problems of the entire universe. They present themselves to the world by first showing the transcendence of the Divine Dao, using the Way of Change as a preferred tool. The “Dao” mentioned by Weixin Shengjiao and Daesoon Jinrihoe is not part of traditional Taoism, but a new transformed “Dao.” It is this new “Dao,” as “the Eternal Bright Heaven” brought by the Way of Change in Weixin Shengjiao or “the everlasting Later World” of Daesoon Jinrihoe, that allows these religions to open up a new spiritual path and create new opportunities.

Jin Xun believes that new religions in Korea use the concept of “integration” for reinterpreting the Three Teachings in an innovative way, and seek to further “unify” the teachings from the standpoint of “self” (Jin 2006, 103). Placing the “self” at the center of religion is a common approach in new religions. Weixin Shengjiao and Daesoon Jinrihoe also see themselves as a new and final stage in the evolution of East Asian religious thought. For Weixin Shengjiao, the Weixin School represents the culmination of the Three Teachings. Daesoon Jinrihoe claims to have entered into the phase of “Guanwang (冠旺)” after the Three Teachings, to become the most mature new religion. Both movements are based on the proclamation that Chinese cultural orthodoxy shifted to their own new religion. They also confirm that new religions today should confront the double jeopardy of nationality and the world.

The end of Martial Law in Taiwan was not the end of Taiwan’s dire circumstances in the international society. On the one hand, Taiwan faced Western forces of globalization. On the other hand, Taiwan continued its confrontation with Mainland China and the Chinese Communist Party. Moreover, the diverse ethnic groups on the island took different stands, and conflicts between unification and independence escalated. Weixin Shengjiao uses the perspective of Divine Dao in the Way of Change to transcend political positions, viewing cross-Strait relations as arising from a remote origin, the grievances of Chinese ancestors. It expands the definition of nationality and advocates “Chinese cultural orthodoxy” for extending the Divine Dao to all East Asian countries, viewing the entire East Asia as a unified “religious community.” Weixin Shengjiao is clearly a this-worldly religion, but it also claims that Divine

Dao is a way to transcend humanity. It shows concern for the fate of both Taiwan and the other nations through enlightenment and revelation, and claims it would be able to eventually lead the world into “the Eternal Bright Heaven.”

Daesoon Jinrihoe in turn hopes to “open a path to the everlasting Later World” through the reordering of the universe, which is the only way of “resolving grievances.” It believes that Kang Jeungsan, as a divine incarnation, used Divine Dao to integrate Korea, Japan and China into a larger East Asian community, capable of resisting Western forces. In modern times, the concept of “resolving grievances” is applied to the history of confrontation between North and South Korea, as well as to the complex situation of a globalized world. How the new religions will be able to face this double jeopardy will show their character and possibilities, and may ultimately determine their fate.

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