

---

# The Journal of CESNUR



Volume 1, Issue 2  
November–December 2017

---

⊗ The Journal of CESNUR ⊗

**Director-in-Charge** | Direttore responsabile

Marco Respinti

**Editor-in-Chief** | Direttore

Massimo Introvigne

*Center for Studies on New Religions, Turin, Italy*

**Associate Editor** | Vicedirettore

PierLuigi Zoccatelli

*Pontifical Salesian University, Turin, Italy*

**Editorial Board / International Consultants**

Milda Ališauskienė

*Vytautas Magnus University, Kaunas, Lithuania*

Eileen Barker

*London School of Economics, London, United Kingdom*

Luigi Berzano

*University of Turin, Turin, Italy*

Antoine Faivre

*École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, France*

Holly Folk

*Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington, USA*

Liselotte Frisk

*Dalarna University, Falun, Sweden*

J. Gordon Melton

*Baylor University, Waco, Texas, USA*

Susan Palmer

*McGill University, Montreal, Canada*

Stefania Palmisano

*University of Turin, Turin, Italy*

Bernadette Rigal-Cellard

*Université Bordeaux Montaigne, Bordeaux, France*

**Instructions for Authors** and submission guidelines can be found on our website at [www.cesnur.net](http://www.cesnur.net).

**ISSN: 2532-2990**

*The Journal of CESNUR* is published bi-monthly by CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions),  
Via Confienza 19, 10121 Torino, Italy.

## Contents

### Articles

- 3 Weixin Shengjiao: An Introduction  
*Massimo Introvigne*
- 20 The Supranational Messianism of Weixin Shengjiao: Unifying the Two Chinas Thanks to the Celebration of Mythical Ancestors  
*Bernadette Rigal-Cellard*
- 40 New Religions in Taiwan and Korea: A Comparative Study of Weixin Shengjiao (唯心聖教) and Daesoon Jinrihoe (大巡真理會)  
*Fiona Hsin-Fang Chang*
- 66 A Comparison Between Daesoon Jinrihoe's "Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence" and Weixin Shengjiao's "Resolving Grievances to Make Life Harmonious"  
*Taesoo Kim*

### Research Notes

- 96 "Cult Crimes" and Fake News: Eye-Gouging in Shanxi  
*Holly Folk*

### Book Reviews

- 110 Rebecca Stott, *In the Days of Rain. A Daughter. A Father. A Cult*  
*Reviewed by Massimo Introvigne*

## Weixin Shengjiao: An Introduction

Massimo Introvigne  
*Center for Studies on New Religions*  
maxintrovigne@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT:** Weixin Shengjiao, founded in the early 1980s by Chang Yi-Jui, later known as Grand Master Hun Yuan, is one of the largest Taiwanese new religions, with some 300,000 members in Taiwan and abroad. This introduction places Weixin Shengjiao within the context of the religious effervescence that followed the end of the Martial Law period in 1987 in Taiwan. It shows how the movement's success is due to its institutionalization of very popular forms of folk religion, and its emergence as an authoritative source of teachings about I Ching and Feng Shui, both techniques that interest a large number of Chinese in Mainland China, Taiwan, and the diaspora. Its doctrines are rooted in a sacred history of China and the world. The main challenge of Weixin Shengjiao is now how to expand internationally a movement so much rooted in Chinese mythology and practices.

**KEYWORDS:** Weixin Shengjiao, Weixinism, New Religions in Taiwan, Hun Yuan, Taiwanese New Religious Movements.

### *Introduction*

When I last visited Taiwan, in January 2017, I was told that the island is home to the largest number of new religions headquartered in a single country or territory in the whole world. I am not aware of statistics, and surely there are also hundreds of new religious movements in Korea, and even in two countries less studied by the specialists of the matter, Vietnam (Hoang 2017) and Indonesia (Makin 2016). At any rate, there is little doubt that Eastern Asia offers persuasive evidence that new religious movements continue to be born and prosper, and that hundreds of them are understudied or not studied at all by scholars.

One such case is Weixin Shengjiao, a large new religious movement born in Taiwan in 1984 and now becoming international. CESNUR discovered it

through papers given at its conferences by Taiwanese scholars. Because of friendships born during CESNUR conferences, as Bernadette Rigal-Cellard explains in her article, some Western scholars were invited to The International New Religion Interaction Forum of Weixin Shengjiao in Taichung, which followed the impressive Unified Ancestor Worship Ceremony for Chinese in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, held on January 1, 2017 in Taipei's Linkou Stadium.

Apart from two entries I wrote for an online encyclopedia (Introvigne 2016; 2017), the articles published in this issue of *The Journal of CESNUR* are the first to appear in a Western scholarly publication on this movement. Bernadette Rigal-Cellard offers some elements of context, and a comparison between Weixin Shengjiao and another growing Eastern Asian new religion, Korea's Daesoon Jinrihoe, is proposed by both Fiona Hsin-Fan Chang, from a Taiwanese perspective, and Taesoo Kim, from a Korean perspective.

Some overlapping between the articles is unavoidable, and general information about what Weixin Shengjiao is all about are also scattered in the articles of the issue. However, since the movement is virtually unknown to Western scholars, some basic information are also offered in this introduction.

### *The Taiwanese Context*

The context for the rise of Weixin Shengjiao, one of Taiwan's largest indigenous new religions, in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century included three main elements. The first was the religious effervescence in Taiwan after World War II, which grew out of a pre-existing disparate mosaic of religious organizations and beliefs, including the traditional Three Teachings (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism) and a variety of folk religions. New religions normally did not deny the Three Teachings, but integrated all of them with folk beliefs into syncretistic projects guided by their founders' religious creativity. The second was the Martial Law, which was in force in Taiwan between 1949 and 1987 and, among other effects, severely limited religious liberty. The end of the long Martial Law period in 1987 allowed several new religions to be legally recognized and registered (see Chang 2016).

The third element was the Cultural Revolution in China (1966–1976), which led to the destruction of thousands of libraries, temples, and other cultural and

religious memories, in the name of a strict interpretation of Marxism and Maoism. As a result, Taiwanese authorities felt that the island should act as the guardian of the endangered Chinese cultural heritage, preserving it for future generations. Although the policy called “Revitalizing Chinese culture” was part of a political strategy through which the last Martial Law governments in Taiwan tried to legitimize themselves, it was also genuinely popular. Taiwanese started to look for groups preserving “Chinese orthodoxy,” i.e. the authentic teachings of ancient Chinese religion and culture. Several new religions seized the opportunity and claimed they could offer precisely such orthodox teachings, first to Taiwanese and later, after the effects of the Cultural Revolution subsided and Cross-Strait relationships between Mainland China and Taiwan improved, to Chinese living in the People’s Republic of China, and to the large international Chinese diaspora.

### *Enter Weixin Shengjiao*

One such new religion was Weixin Shengjiao. Although founded at a comparatively recent date, it developed very fast. The information on its history and doctrine derive from primary sources (Huang 2016, Hun Yuan 2016a, Hun Yuan 2016b), and in a large part from interviews I conducted with the founder, Grand Master Hun Yuan, and with members (called in the movement “virtuous fellows”) in New York, Taiwan, Mainland China, and Europe in 2016 and 2017 (hence the limited number of references).

Its founder, Chang Yi-Jui, later known as Grand Master Hun Yuan, was born in Zhongliao Township, Nantou County, Taiwan, in 1944. Until he was 39, his main interests were not in the field of religion, although he was a lifelong reader of the Chinese Classics, particularly of the *I Ching* (Classic of Changes), whose origins date back to the Western Zhou period (1000–750 BCE) and which is both a philosophical and cosmological treatise and a manual for divination. The expression “I Ching” refers both to the book and to the doctrine it presents. The book includes 64 hexagrams, each of which combines, in a different way, the basic eight trigrams, also called “Bagua” (the eight symbols), i.e. vertical sequences of three lines, either broken or unbroken. Broken lines represent Yin (the female, passive, and shadowy side of the universe) and unbroken lines represent Yang (the male, active, and luminous principle).

Chang graduated at the Land Survey Department of Kuang-Hwa Senior Industrial Vocational High School in Taichung City, Taiwan. He went on to teach Engineering Measurement at the same school and established Zhong Xin Measuring Ltd., the oldest company of land surveying and measurement in Taiwan. These successful mundane activities were not completely far away from spirituality, as Chang was also interested in Feng Shui, one of the classical Five Arts of Chinese Metaphysics, whose aim is to harmonize human beings with their environment, including the land, and which is widely used to orient buildings in an auspicious way. Although suppressed by the Cultural Revolution in China, and regarded with some suspicion by the official cultural policies prevailing under Martial Law in Taiwan, Feng Shui remained immensely popular among all Chinese.

In 1982, Chang fell seriously ill, and attributed his recovery to divine intervention and to his vow that, should he recover, he would abandon secular activities and devote his life to spirituality. After his recovery, Chang received several revelations from high spiritual beings and felt he was now united with the deified Chinese sage Guiguzi. He then went to a pilgrimage to Mount Dawu, in Taitung County, with a few friends. There, he reported that the Jade Emperor, the supreme ruler of the universe in Chinese mythology, gave him a message, advising him “never to be selfish” and to “encourage people for self-cultivation” (Hun Yuan 2016a, 59).

In 1983, in the day of the Lantern Festival, Chang opened a family hall called Yi Yao She in Taichung City for worshiping Buddha and solving his followers’ problems through divination. In 1984, Yi Yao She was expanded and renamed Shennong Temple. On October 12, 1984, Chang was given the Buddhist name Hun Yuan by divine revelation. He started teaching I Ching, Feng Shui, and Buddhism to an increasing number of disciples.

In 1987, Martial Law was finally lifted in Taiwan, which enabled Grand Master Hun Yuan to spread to larger audiences the teachings of “Weixin Shengjiao” (“Sacred Teachings of Mind Only”). The name refers to the doctrine that “the mind is the Buddha” (Hun Yuan 2016a, 47), or “mind is the only method” (Hun Yuan 2016a, 42). “The rising and falling of everything, the movement teaches, depend on the mind” (Hun Yuan 2016a, 43). Accordingly, “the method of this religion is to cultivate the mind” (Hun Yuan 2016a, 43). The notion of “mind,”

on the other hand, is not constructed according to Western or rationalist models and includes what is commonly called the heart.

By the time of the group's legal recognition, the Shennong Temple had become too small to accommodate all the Master's followers, and land was purchased in Nantou County. In 1989, the Hsien-Fo Temple, which continues serving as headquarters of Weixin Shengjiao to this very day, was inaugurated on Chan-Chi Mountain. Both the land and the architecture of the impressive buildings were chosen according to Feng Shui principles. The area includes I Ching University, founded in 1996, temples, and cultural facilities.

In fact, in addition to some forty branch temples in Taiwan, Weixin Shengjiao has built, starting in 2002, a temple complex honoring the three ancestors of the Chinese people on Ciao Mountain, Hebei Province, China. From 1998, Grand Master Hun Yuan led his followers in pilgrimages to Yunmeng Mountain, in the Chinese province of Henan, where the historical Guiguzi is said to have established the oldest military academy in China, in a place where a shrine to him was erected in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 2001, a contract was signed for constructing near that shrine the City of Eight Trigrams, or Town of Chinese Culture. Construction is ongoing and, when completed, will include temples, a cultural research center, and a campus of I Ching University. The size of the buildings already completed, which I visited in June 2017, is at any rate impressive. According to Grand Master Hun Yuan, the City of Eight Trigrams "is the debut of lasting Cross-Strait peace as well as the start of the great Chinese reunion of all people propagating Chinese culture together" (Huang 2016, 85). From 2001, several academic initiatives including scholars from both Taiwan and Mainland China were also organized in different locations.

In addition to China, Weixin Shengjiao established overseas branches in Japan, Vietnam, United States (Los Angeles and New York), Australia (with events held also in New Zealand), Canada (Vancouver and Toronto), and Spain. The global core membership of the movement grew to about 300,000, with a larger audience estimated by Taiwan's Ministry of Internal Affairs at one million. This rapid success was achieved through three principal strategies. First, Weixin Shengjiao became the leading agency, at least in Taiwan, offering information and teaching on I Ching and Feng Shui, both in their philosophical dimensions and practical applications, including divination. Polls show that this remains a matter of great interest for most of the Chinese population, even among those who



regard themselves as not religious. Through I Ching University and Weixin Shengjiao College (which has been accredited in 2013 by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education), the movement offers courses like those of traditional universities, but it also promotes “lifelong learning” for adults and teaches I Ching to children. The latter program has involved more than two million children in Taiwan only. A study by Taiwanese scholars Chen, Li, Song Lin and P.-C. Lin, who are themselves members of the movement, concluded that these I Ching courses improved the temperament of children and their attitudes towards learning, respecting schoolmates, and avoid bullying (Chen, Li, Lin and Lin 2015).

In addition to courses and seminars, Grand Master Hun Yuan became a familiar presence on Taiwanese national television, through the daily programs *View All Perspectives of I Ching – Feng Shui* (1998), *Everybody Comes to Learn I Ching* (1998), and *Feng Shui of My Home* (digital, 2004). In 2009, the movement launched its own TV channel, Wei Xin TV. From 1995, conventions about I Ching and Feng Shui are organized in stadiums normally used for sport events, with tens of thousands of participants. Several books published by the movement became best sellers in Taiwan, including the early *Feng Shui World View* (1995).

The second reason of Weixin Shengjiao rapid growth relates to the popularity of the idea of “Chinese Orthodoxy” in Taiwan and, increasingly, in Mainland China and among the global Chinese diaspora. Grand Master Hun Yuan claimed that he was able to rectify century-old mistakes in the interpretation of I Ching, including the attempt by academics to marginalize its practical application to divination by emphasizing its philosophical content only. This does not mean that Weixin Shengjiao despises academic studies, both on I Ching and China’s early past. On the contrary, while the movement is aware that its traditional narrative of early Chinese history and the origins of I Ching is regarded as largely mythological in the academia, it actively promotes interaction with academics and a continuous dialogue between mythical and scholarly reconstructions of the Chinese past. The participation of leading academics to Weixin Shengjiao’s conferences reinforces the public image of the movement as an organization seriously committed to study and protect “Chinese Orthodoxy.”

The third factor in the movement’s success is the longing for peace in the global Chinese community of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, after a 20<sup>th</sup> century marked by so many bloody wars. Grand Master Hun Yuan believes that there will be no world

peace without Cross-Strait peace. His strategy for promoting peace between Taiwan and Mainland China is to emphasize that they both share the same cultural and spiritual roots, and all Chinese descend from the Three Great Ancestors. Weixin Shengjiao also insists that the historical Guiguzi's teachings were ultimately about peace through diplomacy. The movement has promoted both spiritual dialogue between Taiwan and Mainland China, by organizing pilgrimages of Taiwanese to spiritually significant locations in China and by building temples and religious centers there, and, as mentioned earlier, cultural exchanges between scholars.

Grand Master Hun Yuan insists that, in its historical roots, the Chinese culture is a culture of peace and harmony. He believes that both Cross-Strait reconciliation and the globalization of Chinese spirituality, of which Weixin Shengjiao is an important part, would eventually become key factors in the promotion of world peace. In 2009, he founded the Taiwan Wei Xin Association for World Peace. On October 26, 2010, in the City of Eight Trigrams in China both Taiwanese and Chinese organizations signed a "Letter of Intent" for promoting the ancient culture of China, reconciliation among the Chinese, and, through it, world peace.

Weixin Shengjiao also maintains that it is not enough to talk about peace in academic conferences. It is also necessary to show solidarity in time of need. On September 21, 1999, the 921 (also known as Jiji) earthquake hit Taiwan, leaving 2,415 dead and 11,305 injured. Grand Master Hun Yuan launched the I Ching and Feng Shui Interest Circle, whose members were recruited among students of Weixin Shengjiao with an advanced knowledge of Feng Shui. The movement believed that Feng Shui would be useful in guiding the reconstruction after the earthquake, but also offered relief and assistance to the homeless. The organization evolved into the Feng Shui Interest Circle Service Team, which helps needy families in both Taiwan and Mainland China, again by offering both material help and suggestions based on the principles of Feng Shui. Advice is also offered to the business community, based on the idea that I Ching and Feng Shui may benefit "sustainable development" of large and small corporations. Grand Master Hun Yuan teaches that "each factory is like a temple" and has set the goal to bring his programs about Feng Shui and I Ching to 10,000 Taiwanese factories. In turn, these activities have enhanced the credibility of the movement's commitment to world peace and development.

Grand Master Hun Yuan is the charismatic leader of Weixin Shengjiao. His charisma derives from having founded the movement and having received divine revelations and holy scriptures from supernatural beings. He is also regarded as mysteriously united with the deified Guiguzi. As Taiwanese scholar Su-Wei Hsieh noticed, the revelations of Guiguzi legitimize the Master, but symmetrically “in order to make acceptable the revelation of Wanchan [i.e. Guiguzi], Hun Yuan himself must be legitimized as a matchless individual. A substantial number of hagiographic books, pamphlets, and audiovisual resources elevate Hun Yuan from the class of ordinary human beings to that of a sage or a saint” (Hsieh 2015, 30–31). Weixin Shengjiao also operates an historical museum at its headquarters, which includes a presentation of the Master’s life through a typically hagiographic narrative, and a selection of his works of art.

Below the Master, who remains personally responsible for all the main decisions, the movement has what Fiona Chang has described as a “clergy” structure, with the four classes of masters, lecturers, chanters, and preachers (Chang 2016, 5). There is, however, also a parallel leadership structure within the many societies and associations established by Grand Master Hun Yuan for specialized purposes, according to a pattern common to other East Asians new religions.

### *A Doctrine Rooted in the Sacred History of China*

Weixin Shengjiao’s doctrine is set in the context of a mythological history of China, although, as mentioned earlier, the movement continuously compares this sacred history with the findings of academics, and keeps promoting conferences aimed at fostering this dialogue. The origins of Chinese culture are seen in a civilization called Kunlun, which flourished along the long chain of Kunlun Mountains in prehistorical times. The movement believes that the range of the Kunlun Mountains extends to Taiwan and forms what in Feng Shui is called a “dragon node.”

Kunlun’s heritage was transmitted to Fuxi, believed to have been a king in the third millennium BCE and the main originator of I Ching and its central component, the Eight Trigrams (Bagua). Fuxi’s knowledge was transmitted to Jiutian Xuannu, the “mysterious woman” described in the Chinese classics as the goddess of longevity, sexuality, and war. She appeared on Earth, also in the third

millennium BCE, to become the teacher of the Yellow Emperor, a mythical early Chinese sovereign who was one of the Three Great Chinese Ancestors. The others were the Yan Emperor (identified with the sage-ruler Shennong) and Chiyou. In Chinese mythology, Chiyou is a villain, a tyrant who defeated the Yan emperor but was in turn defeated by the Yellow Emperor at the epic battle of Zhuolu, traditionally placed in the 26<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Chiyou, however, is worshipped by Weixin Shengjiao together with the other two Great Ancestors. This seeming anomaly has been explained by Fiona Chang with the fact that Chiyou is believed to be the ancestor of Chinese ethnic minorities and, through his worship, they are also incorporated in the movement's grand project of reconciliation (Chang 2016, 8; see also Chang's article in this issue of *The Journal of CESNUR*).

The legitimate successor of the Three Ancestor in this lineage of Chinese sages was Guiguzi, a central figure for Weixin Shengjiao. Guiguzi, "the Sage of Ghost Valley," is the name given both to a treatise about politics, peace, and diplomacy that appeared towards the end of the Warring States period in Chinese history (4<sup>th</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE) and to his author, of whom little is known. Reportedly, he was the teacher of several key political and military figures of his period, and the founder of a military academy.

Again, the movement is aware that many facts about Guiguzi are disputed by historians and is willing to interact with them. In 2003, it founded the Taiwan Gui Gu Zi Academy to build a space of dialogue with academics on Guiguzi's life and teachings. One can distinguish, from the historical Guiguzi, the deified Guiguzi, identified with the Bodhisattva Wang Chan Lao Zu. The transformation of Guiguzi into a god has a century-old history in China. He was regarded as a god of trade, divination, and Feng Shui. However, in Weixin Shengjiao, as Fiona Chang has noticed, "Guiguzi far exceeds the confines of a trade deity, and descends into the world as an enlightened cultivator, integrating Chinese culture" (Chang 2016, 9). In the movement's sacred history and iconography, the deified Guiguzi is surrounded by "guardians," consisting of 33 celestial kings and 72 celestial masters, a notion peculiar to Weixin Shengjiao and connected to the I Ching's trigrams.

It is a central tenet of Weixin Shengjiao that Guiguzi appeared to Grand Master Hun Yuan, mysteriously united with him, and gave to him several books of revelations. They are collected in the sixteen *Apocalypse Sutra* that, together with

six classics from Buddhism, two Confucian classics, and seven from Chinese folk religion (through which a form of popular Taoism is also transmitted), form the canon of the 30 Weixin Sacred Scriptures. In addition, there is the *Weixin Dao Zang*, an impressive set of more than 18,000 volumes collecting all the speeches and lessons of Grand Master Hun Yuan. The movement went to extraordinary lengths to preserve these volumes for the posterity, depositing them in safes that will survive even a nuclear holocaust. The books also became sacred objects in themselves, as they were “presented to Heaven” and consecrated during the movement’s ceremonies.

The long chain of succession from Fuxi to Grand Master Hun Yuan guarantees the authenticity of the teachings and the transmission throughout history of orthodox I Ching and Feng Shui. Weixin Shengjiao believes that the main truth about the universe is summarized in four lines, which are repeated in several texts revealed by Guiguzi to the movement’s founder: “Yin and Yang, Sun and Moon of longevity. Unfortunately, the heavenly truth is hard to comprehend. If the world has Guiguzi, the world will certainly be at peace” (Hun Yuan 2016a, 44).

Both academic scholars and Weixin Shengjiao agree that the I Ching system is strictly connected to the doctrine of Yin and Yang. These produce four phenomena, including the Sun and the Moon, which in turn generate the eight trigrams. Weixin Shengjiao teaches that in the traditional Yin-Yang symbol, the Tai Chi, Buddhism is on the Yang side, Confucianism is on the Yin side, and Taoism represents the method (Tao), or the middle path between Yin and Yang. Through this interpretation of the Tai Chi, the movement claims to assume the heritage of all the Three Teachings (Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism), while walking along the Tao. Thus, it adopts a “neutral” stance towards the Three Teachings, aimed at changing the world through I Ching and Feng Shui and at reaching a state of Yang with no possible return to Yin, known as the Eternal Bright Heaven. The I Ching, according to the movement, “contains all dharma” (Chang 2016, 10) and is the ultimate truth of each of the Three Teachings, the very center of a “Way of Change” leading the world towards a millennial era of peace.

Weixin Shengjiao distinguishes between the “theory” and the “use” of I Ching, epitomized respectively by Confucius (551–479 BCE) and Guiguzi. The movement teaches that theory and use (the latter including divination) cannot be separated, and lead to cultivation of the mind, longevity, happiness, and peace.

However, the theoretical truth has an esoteric dimension and is not easy to master, which explains the lengthy courses offered by the movement. Students attending the “lifelong learning” courses at I Ching University appear to be interested in the theory of I Ching and not only in its practical applications. Answering a 2015 survey of their motivations for enrolling in the University by Chen, Li, and Lin, students indicated “to expand my mind” and “to acquire general knowledge” as the main reasons for going through the courses, although meeting new likeminded friends also scored high (Chen, Li and Lin 2015a). A parallel study by the same three scholars used the psychological concepts of “life satisfaction” and “family satisfaction” and found that both were improved by the experience of attending an adult education course at I Ching University. However, the improvement was more significant when the adults had enrolled in the University motivated by a desire for expanding their knowledge (Chen, Li and Lin 2015b).

Feng Shui is regarded as part of I Ching or, stated in different terms, I Ching and Feng Shui are two sides of the same coin. In the West, where it is also becoming popular, Feng Shui is often understood simply as the art of orienting buildings, and furniture inside the buildings, in an auspicious manner based on geomagnetical, astrological, and spiritual principles. While Feng Shui surely incorporates these techniques, Weixin Shengjiao insists it is much more. In 1995, Guiguzi revealed the *Feng Shui Sutra* to Grand Master Hun Yuan. This is but one of several texts revealing that “Feng Shui is the only way to reach the Buddhist idea of Kong Si (emptiness)” (Hun Yuan 2016a, 49). *Kong Si* is the harmony of human beings and nature, Earth and Heaven, the visible and the invisible. Through the practice of Feng Shui in its orthodox form, individual karmic problems are solved, longevity is achieved, disasters are avoided, and social and cultural work towards world peace becomes effective. Accordingly, promoting the correct practice of Feng Shui and rectifying common mistakes about it is of paramount importance for the movement.

Weixin Shengjiao does not neglect the philosophical and cosmological dimensions of I Ching and Feng Shui, yet its historical starting point was the “use” of these old Chinese systems for practical purposes, including divination and the solution of daily problems. This “use” was rooted in century-old popular Chinese folk religion, and Fiona Chang regards Weixin Shengjiao as a form of “institutionalization of (...) diffused folk beliefs” (Chang 2016, 4).

### *Chanting for World Peace*

Hsieh insisted on the centrality of ritual in Weixin Shengjiao as a “blending of new and old” (Hsieh 2015, 33). The basis is found on (mostly Buddhist) traditional Chinese rituals, but they are creatively reinterpreted by Grand Master Hun Yuan. At the center of the ritual are chanting and ancestor worship. Chanting mantras is aimed at self-improvement, but also has an altruistic dimension, since it is believed that through chanting we may benefit others and the world at large. In December 1997, Grand Master Hun Yuan started the “One Day Zen Event with a Thousand Buddha” at Hsien Fo Temple, since then held on the fourth Sunday of every month. In this event, chanting is practiced to achieve both individual harmony and a larger harmony extending from the families to the whole world.

Chanting may also be directed to avoid disasters and solve international problems. Weixin Shengjiao has a special ritual for “ridding the world of calamities and eliminating disasters,” based on I Ching, Feng Shui (which in this case teaches where and how to arrange an appropriate worship space), and the chanting of sutras. Such chanting is indeed extensive, and proportional to the threat to be averted. The movement reports that in 2014 sutras were chanted 11,2 million times to stop the virus Ebola. The *Sutra of Gui Gu’s Immortal Master’s Heaven Virtues* was chanted 360,000 times in 2005 to eliminate avian flu, 640,000 times in 2007 to close (at least partially) the ozone hole, and 480,000 times in 2007 (together with another sutra) to prevent a threatened eruption of the Mount Fuji volcano in Japan. The sutra was also mobilized in favor of the Western world and, chanted another 360,000 times in 2012, prevented a volcano disaster in the American National Park of Yellowstone (Hun Yuan 2016a, 151–152).

In 2006, Grand Master Hun Yuan founded the Wei Xin College of Buddhist Chants to train ritualistic specialists capable of leading dharma services. He stated that one of his main motivations for establishing this institution was “looking after the realms of both life and death” (Huang 2016, 46). The movement’s rituals honor the ancestors, starting with the Three Great Ancestors and Guiguzi, who are also enshrined in beautiful temples built both in Taiwan and Mainland China. Ancestor worship, Hsieh states, is offered as evidence of the “group’s

authentic participation in time-honored traditions” (Hsieh 2015, 33). However, it goes further than that.

Millions perished in wars, other episodes of violence, and miscellaneous disasters. Their souls are not at peace. Until they are released from their anguish and attain rebirth in Buddha’s Pure Land, their grievances influence negatively events on Earth. The movement teaches that “in order to bring about world peace, we must care for both the realms of life and death” (Huang 2016, 47). Invisibly, but effectively, Weixin Shengjiao’s services bring safety and security to our present world. One example is the dharma service held in April 2004, where millions of victims of the two World Wars and those who perished in the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks were “given peace and settled” in the movement’s main shrine (Huang 2016, 47). Weixin Shengjiao believes that the ritual had a profound impact on the perspectives of Cross-Strait reconciliation and world peace.

Since January 2004, honoring the Great Ancestors and bringing peace to the victims of violence come together in the Unified Ancestor Worship Ceremony for Chinese in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. It is held each year on January 1 in Taipei’s Linkou Stadium and attracts great crowds. Taiwanese political dignitaries, including presidents of the Republic, have also participated in the event. Before the first ceremony took place in 2004, Grand Master Hun Yuan wrote the *Doctrines for Unified Ancestor Ceremony for Chinese in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, detailing the ritual procedure and the meaning of the event. The manual explained that the ceremony honors all the great ancestors, from Fuxi to Guiguzi, as well as the 917 emperors of the history of China and the forefathers of all Chinese family clans, whose traditional number is 15,615. The Master also claimed that Chinese history had, after an initial golden age, 5,000 years of darkness with bloody wars marked by 3,762 battles, where more than ten million died. By pacifying the souls of all the victims and honoring the ancestors, Weixin Shengjiao hopes to revive and spread filial feelings among contemporary Chinese and prepare 5,000 years of peace and harmonious development.

Although the Ancestor Worship Ceremony is held in Taiwan, Chinese from Mainland China and the overseas diaspora are also invited. Increasingly, there is a larger Eastern Asian outlook, as the movement teaches that Koreans descend from one of the three Great Chinese Ancestors, Chiyou, and that the first Japanese emperor, Jimmu, who according to traditional chronology reigned in



the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> century BCE, was a blood relative of a Chinese imperial court sorcerer, Xu Fu (regarded as a prophet by Weixin Shengjiao), who, according to certain traditions or legends, went to Japan and became a king there. Some scholars argue that Xu Fu and Jimmu were one and the same; others believe that neither existed. According to Weixin Shengjiao, Xu Fu was in fact a reincarnation of Guiguzi. The first king of Vietnam, Kinh Duong Vuong (Lôc Tuc), who is said to have reigned between 2879 and 2794 BCE, is also regarded as a descendant of the Yan Emperor, one of the Three Great Chinese Ancestors.

Western scholars are also invited to the conferences and events held in connection with the Ancestor Worship Ceremony. Whether, as the movement becomes global, the ceremony would evolve into an event including a global commemoration of non-Chinese ancestors remains to be seen. Non-Chinese victims of war and other calamities have already been included in Weixin Shengjiao rituals.

### *Looking Towards the Future*

So far, Weixin Shengjiao has proven comparatively uncontroversial. In the United States and the other Western countries where it operates, despite its unconventional beliefs, it has escaped the radars of the anti-cultists, as its activity has been mostly (although not exclusively) confined within the boundaries of the Chinese diaspora.

In Taiwan, the movement's approach to I Ching runs counter a certain academic attitude, which argues that the I Ching's valuable contribution to Chinese culture lies in its philosophical content, while its use as a divination device promotes superstition. Feng Shui's practical applications are also occasionally dismissed as superstitious. During and after the Cultural Revolution, similar objections were also heard in Mainland China, backed by Marxist orthodoxy and enforced through the repressive apparatus of the State. Weixin Shengjiao is aware of these problems and, as mentioned earlier, strives to maintain a dialogue with the academics. In recent years, it has increased its contacts with academics through seminars, conferences, and lectures. On the other hand, it regards the practical applications of I Ching and Feng Shui as crucial not only for their understanding, but also for the promotion of human development and world peace.

Ironically, the Westerners fascinated by I Ching and Feng Shui, not only in the occult-New Age community but also among architects (some of whom claim to derive practical benefits from studying Feng Shui), artists, and writers, are often very much interested in the practical aspects, including divination. To mention just one example, this was certainly the case for celebrated Argentinian novelist Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986) and his friend and leading Argentinian painter, Xul Solar (1887–1963), who pondered for many years the theoretical and practical implications of the I Ching both in his paintings and theoretical writings (Nelson and Artundo 2012). Ernst Bernhard (1896–1965), a German disciple of Carl Gustav Jung (1896–1965) who moved to Rome and became one of Italy's leading psychoanalysts, also regarded divination a constitutive part of I Ching, which played a crucial role in his writings and therapy. One of his patients, Federico Fellini (1920–1993), consulted often I Ching in order to make crucial decision about his movies (Marinangeli 2015, 42–45).

This offers to Weixin Shengjiao both an opportunity and a challenge. After thirty years of growth and expansion among Chinese communities throughout the world, the movement now states that it would like to present its message to a global international audience, beyond the Chinese diaspora, as everybody should be interested in self-cultivation, harmony, and world peace. Grand Master Hun Yuan asked all the branch temples of the movement throughout the world to disseminate the teachings in their respective areas. This would involve the task of translating the main texts of Weixin Shengjiao into other languages, a monumental endeavor given both the magnitude of the movement's corpus of scriptures and the difficulty of rendering Chinese philosophical and spiritual concepts in other tongues. The sacred history and mythology around Guiguzi and other characters also appears as quintessentially Chinese, and not easy to explain to other cultures. Yet, other East Asian movement rooted in local traditions and folk beliefs have successfully started a process of globalization.

Weixin Shengjiao might perhaps also be able to take advantage of a growing international interest in I Ching and Feng Shui. Already, Western architects have approached the movement to learn “orthodox” Feng Shui, and during my observation of the movement I met at least one in New York who ended up joining Weixin Shengjiao and accepting its theological premises in full. Just as several Westerners in the 1960s and 1970s came to accept Indian and Japanese religious systems, from ISKCON to Soka Gakkai, a new generation of spiritual

seekers may well turn to Chinese spirituality and folk beliefs, giving to movements such as Weixin Shengjiao a chance for expanding in the West.

## References

- Chang, Hsin-Fang Fiona. 2016. "Nationalities and the World, the Three Teachings (三教), and the Way of Change (易道) – Religious Connotations of Taiwan's Weixinshengjiao (唯心聖教) and South Korea's Daesoonjinrihoe (大巡真理會)." Paper presented at the CESNUR 2016 International Conference, Daejin University, Pocheon City, Korea, July 5–10. Accessed August 22, 2017. [http://www.cesnur.org/2016/daejin\\_chang.pdf](http://www.cesnur.org/2016/daejin_chang.pdf).
- Chen, Li-Yuen, Li Chen-Mei and Lin Po-Chang. 2015a. "Motivation for Learning I-Ching among Adult Lifelong Learning in I-Ching University." Paper presented at the Asian Conference of Education of The International Academy Forum, Kobe, Japan, October 21–25.
- Chen, Li-Yuen, Li Chen-Mei and Lin Po-Chang. 2015b. "The Relationship between the motivation for I-Ching Learning, Life and Family Satisfaction in a Lifelong Learning Program of I Ching University." Paper presented at the Asian Conference of Education of The International Academy Forum, Kobe, Japan, October 21–25.
- Chen, Li-Yuen, Li Chen-Mei, Lin Sung and Lin Po-Chang. 2015. "The Effect of I-Ching Education on the Temperament of Elementary School Children, Lifelong Learning Capability, and Bullying Behavior." Paper presented at the Asian Conference of Education of The International Academy Forum, Kobe, Japan, October 21–25.
- Hoang, Chung Van. 2017. *New Religions and State's Responses to Religious Diversification in Contemporary Vietnam; Tensions from the Reinvention of the Sacred*. Cham (Zug, Switzerland): Springer.
- Hsieh, Shu-Wei. 2015. "Master, Scriptures and Ritual: A Study on Taiwanese Sacred Teachings of Mind-Only (Weixin Shengjiao 唯心聖教)." Paper presented at the 2016 International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) World Congress, University of Erfurt, Germany, August 23–29.
- Huang, Chun-Zhi. 2016. *Promoter of World Peace Grand Master Huen-Yuan: How Propagating Chinese Culture Contributes to World Peace*. Taichung City (Taiwan): Wei Xin Zong Cultural Communication Co. Ltd.
- Hun Yuan (Grand Master). 2016a. *The New Religion of the World Taiwan Weixin Shengjiao*. Guoxing (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Hsien-Fo Temple of

- Chan-Chi Mountain; New Taipei City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Charity Foundation; and Nantou City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao College.
- Hun Yuan (Grand Master) (Hunyuan Chansi). 2016b. "The Origin of the Dharma." In Weixin Shengjiao, *The International New Religion Interaction Forum of Weixin Shengjiao, December 31, 2016 – January 6, 2017*, Guoxing (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Hsien-Fo Temple of Chan-Chi Mountain; and New Taipei City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Charity Foundation, 2–7.
- Introvigne, Massimo. 2016. "Weixin Shengjiao." *World Religions and Spirituality Project*, November 10. Accessed August 29, 2017. <https://wrl dre ls.org/2016/11/12/weixin-shengjiao/>.
- Introvigne, Massimo. 2017. "Grand Master Hun Yuan." *World Religions and Spirituality Project*, October 25. Accessed November 6, 2017. <https://wrl dre ls.org/2017/10/25/grand-master-hun-yuan/>.
- Makin, Al. 2016. *Challenging Islamic Orthodoxy: Accounts of Lia Eden and Other Prophets in Indonesia*. Cham (Zug, Switzerland): Springer.
- Marinangeli, Luciana. 2015. *I Ching di Ernst Bernhard. Una lettura psicologica dell'antico libro divinatorio cinese*. Roma: La Lepre.
- Nelson, Daniel E. and Patricia M. Artundo. 2012. *Los San Signos. Xul Solar y el I Ching*. Buenos Aires; Fundación Pan Klub and Museo Xul Solar.

## The Supranational Messianism of Weixin Shengjiao: Unifying the Two Chinas Thanks to the Celebration of Mythical Ancestors

Bernadette Rigal-Cellard  
*Université Bordeaux Montaigne*  
brigal@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr

**ABSTRACT:** Weixin Shengjiao (WS) sees itself as helping Taiwan fulfill a paramount mission: the cultural and mystical reunification of the two Chinas to solve cross-Strait tensions and promote peace and prosperity in the country and in the world. This article focuses on one specific ritual WS has elaborated to this end. The Ancestors' Ceremony, held on January 1, 2017, is analyzed to demonstrate how WS astutely combines contemporary Taiwanese politics with the Three Teachings, through the grandiose celebration of the three mythical Chinese ancestors, the Yellow Emperor Huang Ti, the Yan Emperor, and the so far estranged Emperor Chiyao, along with the deified Chinese sage Guiguzi.

**KEYWORDS:** Chinese Mythical Ancestry, Resolving Old Grievances, National Messianism, Cross-Strait Issues, Weixin Shengjiao, Weixinism, Hun Yuan.

### *Introduction*

Weixin Shengjiao (WS) came to me as a gift in December 2016, when I was invited by its Grand Master Hun Yuan, together with J. Gordon Melton, Massimo Introvigne, and several scholars from Korea, to attend the impressive Ancestors' Ceremony held on January 1, 2017, in Taipei, and the many events of The International New Religion Interaction Forum of Weixin Shengjiao in the following days. Our hosts took us to visit several of their temples and holy places in the Taipei area, in Taichung, Nantou, and Yilan. Since it is a virtually unknown religion in the West (with the exception of Introvigne 2016; 2017), this paper intends to locate it on the map of world religions.

Not being a specialist of *Sanjiao heyi*, the harmony of the Three Teachings, Buddhism, Taoism, and Confucianism, I will not analyze here the theological

contents of the rich doctrines of this new Taiwanese religion. I will focus instead on those aspects of WS that I can relate to as a specialist of contemporary Western religions, that is to say the links between culture/politics and religion, thus between WS and Chinese culture, that of the mainland and that of the Republic of China or Taiwan (ROC). Attending several conferences organized or co-organized by CESNUR in Eastern Asia, as well as conversations with Massimo Introvigne and J. Gordon Melton, fueled my interest in these issues.

To the observer, the quest for a return to the “non-divided” China is most interesting, because it operates through the elaboration of very complex rituals, and the interaction with the business and political world of ROC. WS displays several characteristics of those millenarian religious movements that spring out of social distress, in a situation of colonization or post-colonization and/or in a situation of perturbing rapid social transformations, leading in this particular case to an original form of national messianism. WS is definitely a spiritual enterprise with a coherent political, social, and cultural purpose.

Founded in the 1980s, WS now numbers some 300,000 members (fewer than the official numbers, government sources occasionally mentioning one million: Introvigne 2016). It has built some 40 temples all around the island, in Mainland China and in the USA. It is also completing the construction of its Bagua Holy City, on the hills above Nantou, which will join in size the huge religious venues of other Taiwanese religions.

I will present the context of the foundation of WS, its strong link to Chinese spiritual traditions, and its particularities on the religious scene of Taiwan: its focus on specific heroes of Chinese mythical genealogy in order to bring about the reunification of the two Chinas, a reunification seen as cultural and mystical, but not political, since the constant threat of being attacked by Communist China is most worrisome to all the people we met.

I have drawn on my observation during the first week of January 2017, our interviews with Grand Master, with the teachers of his various colleges, with many of his disciples and above all, his daughter Fiona Chang, to whom I am much indebted, and whom I again met at international conferences in Bordeaux in May 2017 and in Israel in July 2017. WS has now translated into English several items of its explanatory literature (Huang 2016, Hun Yuan 2016a), and there are several very dense articles analyzing it, notably the one presented by Fiona Chang at Cesnur 2016 in Korea (Chang 2016), from which I have drawn various

remarks. Yet we do face a problem as scholars who do not speak Chinese: none of the 18,000 volumes written by Grand Master has been translated so far. This must be the following step for WS to become academically studied by international scholars.

### *The Foundation of WS*

As is often the case in the birth of religious movements, it was the severe illness of the future Grand Master Hun Yuan and his miraculous recovery that triggered his deep interest in religion, as a form of *ex voto* to thank the spirits who helped him recover. Physical suffering leads to spiritual quest, and physical recovery to the need to share the fruit of such beneficial experience. In the realm of ethnic religions elaborated to give back pride to their members, there are several examples of similar processes with a major figure of the group in agony and resurrecting miraculously: one thinks in particular of Handsome Lake (1735–1815), the founder of the Iroquois Long House religion, as well as of John Slocum (1838–1897), the founder of another Native North American religion, the Indian Shakers, both in the 19th century.

The literature of the religion explains that Chang Yi-Jui was born in 1933 in Zhongliao Township, Nantou County, Taiwan. He became a land surveyor and founded a measuring company. In 1982, he fell ill and, when he recovered, he understood that it was his practice of Pure Land Dharma that had cured him. He then felt he was becoming one with a major mystical figure:

Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva invited Taoism Taiji Heaven Wang Chan Lao Zu to descend to the mundane world and to enter into Hunyuan's body and heart. ... Since the Deity had entered into his body and heart, his body is the Buddha's body, his heart is the Buddha's heart. (Hun Yuan 2016b, 3)

A mission was then entrusted to him:

You have to help Amitabha to ferry five hundred Rohan's to return to the Western Pure Land. In the meantime, you have to transcend the holy spirits of fifteen thousand six hundred and fifteen surnames of Three Chinese Ancestors. (Hun Yuan 2016b, 4)

Chang Yi-Jui opened a family hall in Taichung. Building on the Three Teachings of China, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, he organized the worship of Buddha, using divination to help followers. In 1984 the hall was expanded into the Shennong temple. A divine revelation gave him the title Grand Master Hun Yuan.

*How the Political and Cultural Context of Taiwan Shaped the Orientations of WS*

French specialists of the religious and political history of Taiwan, notably Evelyne Micollier and Benoît Vermander, have explained how religious groups took advantage of the new political situation in the island in the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Micollier 1998a; Vermander 1995; Vermander 1998). Both Micollier in her 1998 paper (Micollier 1998a) and Fiona Chang explain how these religious evolutions were an intrinsic part of the more general social changes (Chang 2016). They stress the paramount importance of mainland Chinese immigration to the island in the last centuries and the fact that the identity of Taiwan had to be constantly redefined according to the new norms imposed by the incoming communities and the successive governments. Major upheavals imprinted collective consciousness thus impacting religious changes as well:

— Taiwan has always been a prized territory for its neighbors. In recent centuries, it was occupied repeatedly by the Chinese: “Cheng Cheng-Kung (鄭成功) [1624–1662] ruled Taiwan in 1662, Shih Lang (施琅) [1621–1696] of the Qing Dynasty led forces to Taiwan in 1683 and made it a part of the Qing Dynasty” (Chang 2016, 2). This led to struggles between the new settlers and the aborigines, and fights among the Chinese newcomers between those faithful to the Ming dynasty and those favorable to the new Qing dynasty.

— The penetration of the Europeans as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> century. If the Protestants came in force in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholics were the first to reach the island (that they named Formosa, “the Beautiful”) via the Portuguese voyages. Taiwan was included in 1514 in a Portuguese diocese. Then in 1576 a Chinese only diocese that included Taiwan was founded in Macau. Between 1.5 to 2% of the population is Catholic today. Christians organized various missions to convert locals to either Protestantism or Catholicism and in any case to a radically novel manner of looking at the universe and at oneself.

— The introduction of messianic elements and of vegetarianism (mostly derived from Zhai Jiao, a syncretic teaching that borrows elements from Chan [Zen] Buddhism, the so called White Lotus religion or Badian jiao, and popular Daoism) in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which coincided approximately with the arrival of the refugees from the Taiping insurrection and the reaction of society to the scourge of opium.



— The Japanese occupied the island from 1895 to 1945 and profoundly marked it as well, in all domains. They notably tried to impose new religious practices and belief systems, in particular after 1930.

— With their defeat, the island was returned to China, only to become again a pawn in the large-scale war between the troops of Chiang Kai-shek (1887–1975) and those of Mao Tse-tung (1893–1976). As we know, the defeated army of Chiang took refuge in Taiwan in 1949, along with a massive influx of civilians. Thus, the demographics of the island were again totally modified, the latter inflow adding up to several waves of mainland Chinese and of Japanese who settled along older Chinese populations and aboriginal people. As is constantly explained to visitors, all these waves provoked a malaise within various social classes, the newcomers often treating the ones already settled in demeaning ways.

— With the installation of the nationalist government after the war, religious leaders also arrived from mainland China, which provoked a major inflation of the “religious offer” that was to impact Taiwanese society for the coming decades (Micollier 1998a, 31).

— The most preoccupying danger today is the One China policy and the looming threat of military invasion, what is called the cross-Strait issue. WS presents itself as a “structured answer” to the major challenges faced by the Taiwanese. These challenges are, on the one hand, a very successful and intense involvement of the country in all the networks of globalization, with the concomitant risk to its cultural identity, as Fiona Chang (2016) explains most clearly, and the constant threat of annihilation as a progressive, independent nation.

Following David K. Jordan and Daniel L. Overmyer (Jordan and Overmyer 1986), Micollier explains a Taiwanese specificity in the field of religion that will allow us to situate more accurately WS. All the transformations listed above, as well as the fact that a lot of people were left out of the traditionally validated ways to succeed socially in the midst of rapid modernization, led people to feel more comfortable in traditionalism. Hence, many new religions have developed a traditionalist ideology in a society modernizing at a fast pace. Their adepts are able to recover their self-esteem sufficiently to tolerate change, while refusing to experience it themselves (Micollier 1998a). In Taiwan, traditionalists are not opposed to modernity, but they claim they first and foremost belong to a specific tradition (Jordan and Overmyer, 276).

One major upheaval took place in 1987, with the end of the martial law that had been imposed by Chiang Kai-shek, and later by his son. This breakthrough liberalized religious creativity and many new movements, building on traditional practices, appeared or developed more freely, whereas folk inspired religions such as divination and geomancy had been persecuted earlier (see Chang 2016, 3–5). WS is typically one such movement that the evolution of the political context allowed to progress in two complementary ways: to grow in numbers unhindered, and to affirm its spiritual identity even more. It is worth noting that I first presented this paper in a symposium organized by the Centre Durkheim at the Université de Bordeaux, where all the other papers analyzed the evolutions of the state regulations of religions in Vietnam, China, and Japan over the last decades. My own object of study was the perfect example of what happens when state regulations disappear. WS is clearly a success story, made possible by the end of the martial law and it, has never had to go underground unlike many similar religions in mainland China.

One must also take into account the impact of the upheavals listed above, as the last centuries of the history of Taiwan did play a major role in the elaboration of the doctrines and rituals of WS. As an acute observer of his society, Grand Master Hun Yuan understood how the series of invasions and dictatorial governments had greatly perturbed the Taiwanese, whether they be perceived as a united people or as the sum of various ethnic groups, and he sought to redress the unbalance.

In the introduction of her 2016 paper, Fiona Chang looks at the consequences of the attack against ethnic and national feelings in a situation of oppression either at the hand of foreign powers or of domestic dictatorship, what she entitles “Double Jeopardy of Nationalities and the World.” She explains how the sovereignty crisis experienced by the people in the 19<sup>th</sup> century due to colonization, but also in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, due to the attack on local cultures by the advance of Western culture, led to the creation of “many new religions with national consciousness [that] were motivated to revitalize the Three Teachings, emphasizing the subjectivity of Eastern nationalities on this basis” (Chang 2016, 1).

Here, the “revitalization theory” of Anthony Wallace (1923–2015) can help us understand the birth of religions such as WS. In a situation of anomy, of loss of bearings, with the weakening of group identity and the disappearance of common

visions, a prophet, or someone akin to this function, will rise and understand, either through his own conscious efforts or through some miraculous means, such as divine revelation, how to build a new movement that will alleviate the sufferings of people and give them a sense of direction (Wallace 1956; Wallace 1966).

Typically, in such circumstances, the new religion invents a configuration that integrates two main strands: those parts of the newcomers' value systems that can be useful to the group and quite a lot of strands from the old religion. The latter will be reoriented to give a feeling of familiarity to the members. Or, in the words of Fiona Chang: "When facing the impact of foreign cultures, learning how to strengthen oneself from advanced civilizations and absorbing nutrients from one's own traditions is a way of self-affirmation" (Chang 2016, 1).

Often groups founded in stressful situations develop millenarian characteristics. WS exhibits several of them in the sense that it claims that thanks to its rituals, Pure Land will at last become reality.

From the point of view of spirituality, everything in WS belongs to the Three Teachings, which seem to be practiced in a very traditional way, with what seems to be an emphasis on Buddhist rituals such as sutra chanting. Yet, contrary to what is usually observed in revitalization cases, as mentioned above, WS has not integrated foreign spiritual imports whatsoever. We asked Grand Master Hun Yuan whether he had looked into other religions, Christianity for example, or Islam or Hinduism, in order to integrate some of their beliefs in WS. Foreign imports, notably Protestantism and Islam, can be found in the major Taiwanese new religion Yiguandao, alongside the Three Teachings (Micollier 1998b; Micollier 2007, 45). Grand Master's answer remained very general: "All groups are brothers and one must work towards world peace." In the page "Main Purpose" of the program of *The International New Religion Interaction Forum of Weixin Shengjiao*, it is stated: "Weixin Shengjiao is looking forward to interacting with other religions in the world to exchange and share our cultural experiences" (Weixin Shengjiao 2016b, 17). I assume this does not imply concrete imports into WS doctrines, for this would run against the program intended in the foundation of the movement: a complete and unwavering inscription into Chinese ancestral culture and religions.

Western imports may be seen nonetheless in its various social services and its Charity Foundation. Such activities in non-Christian religions were often set up

to counteract the intense social activities of the Christian missionaries, as happened for example in Buddhism and Islam as well. Schak and Hsiao explain how Cheng Yen (b. 1937), the founder of Tzu Chi, acted after talking to Christian nuns. They suggested that, since Buddhism taught compassion, she should abide by this tenet and build schools, hospitals and other institutions to help the poor and not just preach compassion (Schak and Hsiao 2005, 56). Similar phenomena are found in Islam (Rigal-Cellard 2017).

The new religion is thus not a combination of exogenous and indigenous beliefs, but on the contrary a strong revitalization, not so much in the sense of Wallace but in the shape of a reinforcement, of ancestral spiritualities. Yet, WS does not content itself with a mere strengthening of the Three Teachings: to buttress them, it has added to them two other age old folk Chinese techniques, I Ching and Feng Shui. These are seen as infallible tools to implement the positive message of the Three Teachings in the material world.

In the words of Fiona Chang: “The rise of Weixinshengjiao can be described as the ‘institutionalization’ of these diffused folk beliefs, turning them into a systematic, organized religion” (Chang 2016, 4). The other reinforcement is sought in the celebration of the mythic genealogy inherited from ancestral China.

### *Honoring Mythic Chinese Genealogy, the Hierarchy Deriving from Fu Xi and the Three Emperors*

Just as Taiwan considers itself as the conservatory of ancestral China, of its arts and spirituality, eradicated in the Mainland by Communism, WS embeds all its rituals and doctrines in the mythic lineage of the Chinese. It offers itself as the best agent to reestablish the long-gone harmony of Chinese culture and to operate a meaningful symbiosis between all its ethnic communities, which centuries of conflicts have sundered and displaced. The importance granted to Emperor Chiyu is most significant in this respect. Chiyu is one of the two mythical ancestors to whom specific dedication is granted in WS, the other one being Guiguzi, a military strategist of the Warring States Period (475–221 BCE) said to have been the earthly embodiment of Bodhisattva Wang Chan Lao Tzu. Through this selection, WS differentiates itself from other sister new religions in Taiwan.

Not being able to distinguish whether WS interprets the mythical genealogy in a “canonical way” (if such an expression makes sense in the field), I will simply here summarize the attributes conferred in the literature of WS on the major ancestors. The third chapter, “The doctrines and dogma of Weixin Shengjiao,” of the major book in English on the religion, *The New Religion of the World: Taiwan’s Weixin Shengjiao*, written by Grand Master Hun Yuan (Hun Yuan 2016a, 32–33), opens on the visual representation of the lineage of Grand Master, that shows how the ancestors are positioned. At the origin: Ancestor Fuxi Shi, the Primordial, is emptiness. He was born 7,352 years ago (Hun Yuan 2016a, 11). Below him: Jiutian Xuannu, or the Mysterious Lady of the Nine Heavens. She inherited Knowledge. The Manifested. Two polarities give rise to four phenomena. Below: the three Chinese ancestors, i.e. Emperor Chiyao, Yellow Emperor Huang Ti, Yan Emperor. Below them, Guiguzi, i.e. the Immortal Master Wang Chan Lao Tzu, and below, the figure of Grand Master Hun Yuan or the Eternities. Guiguzi and Grand Master united and passed the knowledge to modern times, including I Ching and Feng shui.

WS honors Wang Chan Lao Tzu (Guiguzi), considered as the leader of Tian-jie, the ecclesial world, while Grand Master Hun Yuan is a master in humankind’s world. Guiguzi, or the Immortal Master Wang Chan Lao Tzu, is always recognizable with his fluffy whip in his right hand and the symbol of Feng Shui in the palm of the left hand placed on his lap. He presides over all the altars of the religion and thus “signs” them as WS, since one does not find him in the numerous Taoist-Buddhist temples of the island (to my knowledge).

Grand Master Hun Yuan wrote the revelations he received from Guiguzi/Wang Chan Lao Tzu in the sixteen *Apocalypse Sutras* and in the more than 18,000 volumes archived as the *Weixin Daozang*, in the headquarter temple complex Chan Chi Shan Fo (that we visited). Concerning the *Apocalypse Sutras*, when I asked Fiona Chang about their contents, we realized that the term “Apocalypse” may not be the proper translation. It should rather be “revelation,” which is the mere English translation of the Greek word “apocalypse,” but it does not carry the frightening connotation of “apocalypse,” which in the West is associated with horrible catastrophes and destructions.

Much attention is given to “Gui Gu culture,” said to derive “from Kunlun civilization” (Hun Yuan 2016a, 34). In his construction of a coherent

development of this culture, Grand Master Hun Yuan traveled literally to its source:

In 1998, [he] led a multitude of his disciples to Xinjiang Tianshan southern road at Tianchi to trace the origin of our ancestors and Gui Gu culture. He took an oath that he would go to the Mother Queen Temple every seven years. He has made three visits to worship her in 1998, 2005, 2013 respectively. (Hun Yuan 2016a, 34)

In 2013, he worshipped at the temple of the Goddess Jiutian Xuannu in Qinghai Kunlun Mountains. “This place shows Chinese heritage and its origin.... It symbolizes the inheritance of continuous Chinese culture” (Hun Yuan 2016a, 35).

Grand Master Hun Yuan taught in 2015 that 14,500 years ago, the universe was chaotic and

Hong Jun Lao Tzu disclosed the secret of chaos, which was developed into the Kunlun civilization. 7,352 years ago, Fuxi founded the Bagua (8 trigrams) in which he invented the first line as heaven and the second line Earth. ... This civilization was later inherited by Jiutian Xuannu. She developed Tai Chi, a so-called Manifested, synthetic Bagua, in which two polarities give rise to four phenomena and so on. After that the knowledge was passed to three ancestors. Yellow Emperor invented the humanities, clothing, food, housing, transportation: he is considered the patriarch of humanity. He advocated human closeness. Yan Emperor invented medicine and agriculture. He advocated to raise and cultivate talented people. As for Emperor Chiyou; he developed metallurgical technology. He is the patriarch of industry. (Hun Yuan 2016a, 36)

The knowledge of the Three Emperors was transferred to Wang Chan Lao Tzu, forming Gui Gu culture, which is

the future of the world as well as a beacon of peace. It is the cornerstone of Chinese culture. Grand Master applied Gui Gu culture to the present time and made it flourish in Taiwan and overseas. Weixin Shengjiao is thus derived from the Kunlun civilization. (Hun Yuan 2016a, 36)

The purpose of founding WS is given in the title page of the 2016 book by Grand Master Hun Yuan. It is directly the heritage of the Yan Emperor: “Raise and cultivate talented people, revitalize and cultivate people’s morals, refine ambitions, create universal harmony” (Hun Yuan 2016a, title page). Chapter 4 of the book enumerates all the qualities of the one specific patriarch of WS: Guiguzi. As mentioned earlier, Guiguzi is the name Bodhisattva Wang Chan Lao Tzu took when he incarnated on Earth during the Warring States period. “He had

108 disciples.” He was a master military strategist, and a descendant of Yellow Emperor. “He cultivated himself to be an immortal” (Hun Yuan 2016a, 53).

He is the light in the darkness of life. He is everywhere and nowhere. His wisdom is of ‘cultivating’ oneself, regulating one’s family, governing the country and ruling the world. ... It is a beacon of merciful salvation. ... In Taiwan, there are immeasurable plights. He saved countless crowds so that he made people full of hope. (Hun Yuan 2016, 54)

The final paragraph sums up his function for Taiwan specifically within the cross-Strait question:

Guiguzi’s great wisdom has spread from China, glowing everywhere in the world and it has benefited people. His divine wisdom saved Taiwanese fellows and shined over every corner of the world, which cannot be understood by ordinary people. His merits are as respectable as heaven. Whether the peace between cross-straits or world peace, all should rely on Guiguzi’s wisdom in order to successfully realize wishes. (Hun Yuan 2016a, 54)

The second major character chosen as a trademark of WS is Emperor Chiyou. Whereas he is normally excluded from the noble lineage, since he is seen as the enemy who fought against the other two Emperors, in WS he is reintegrated into the lineage and hailed as the patriarch of Chinese ethnic groups expelled from the heartland. In fact, in his flight after his defeat he took his armies with him away from the core of the empire to settle in Korea (mostly) and in Japan.

By reinstalling him, the ethnic groups that descend from the same genealogy, but settled on the fringes of the mainland, are embraced back into the fold. It was very clear during the Ancestors Ceremony I attended that the indigenous people of Taiwan were granted a major place, not only by their seating in the middle of the bleachers, directly facing the altar, but also by being given the last show to perform, thus giving an ecumenical coda to the whole celebration.

All the Emperors of China, from the most remote mythical ones to actual historical figures derive from this genealogy. The ceremonies elaborated by WS are addressed to all the 15,615 ancestors. Since hundreds of wars have killed thousands of people, one now should atone for them in order to prepare a better future, Pure Land, for all the Chinese. Here, the term “all the Chinese” must be understood in its broadest sense for WS considers that the royal lineages of the Koreans, the Vietnamese, and the Japanese all descend from the original Emperors.

The ceremony dedicated to ancestors gives the precise figures of those ancestors:

We summon Chinese nationality fifteen thousand six hundred and fifteen ancestors' spirits, Chinese Nationality nine hundred seventeen Emperors and their family holy spirits, [and since in] Qin Dynasty, Fu Xu [the mythical Chinese progenitor of Japanese royalty] landed in Japan, one hundred and twenty-four Japanese Emperors and their family holy spirits, the holy spirits of one hundred and ninety-five Korean Emperors of the Chiyou Emperor descendants that [sic] migrated to Korea. We follow the religious rites to summon all spirits to come to the Ceremony to accept offerings. (Weixin Shengjiao 2016a, 9)

In the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Hall, in the San Bao Branch temple, are listed for prayer purposes the 917 Emperors of China, the celestial Emperors of Japan, and those of Korea. This hall distinguishes this temple from the others:

Its originality compared to the other temples: the Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva Hall. Ksitigarbha Bodhisattva is the main god of the traditional Buddhist belief who is in charge of all the spirits. Therefore, Chinese Ancestors Hall and Emperors Hall were both settled there and they are worshipped by chanting sutras mornings and nights. This is a critical rite to show respect to the ancestors' spirits. The abbot of this temple, Abbot Master Yuan Song is expert in sutra chanting. He is president of the Chanting College, and is responsible for cultivating sutra chanters and preparing Weixin Shengjiao chanting etiquette. (Weixin Shengjiao 2016b, 40)

### *The Ancestors Ceremony, January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2017*

The full title of the event is: "Twelfth Altars of Weixin Shengjiao Chinese Nationality United Ancestors Worship Ceremony." It is a grandiose ceremony, perfectly staged for six hours, in which all the vibrant educational, business, and political segments of Taiwanese society participate:

Today, we have vice president of Republic of China, president of Legislative, and leaders of all fields, representatives of the scholars, farmers, artisans and merchants, representatives of the Three Chinese Ancestors descendants from Taiwan and overseas, [they] sincerely express their grateful and expectation for world peace forever. (Weixin Shengjiao 2016a, 10)

The ritual was first performed in 2004 and since then eleven such ceremonies have taken place. The one of January 2017 was the 12th. We were told that it would evolve in the future and be somewhat different from what we were participating in (but we don't know how). The Linkou Stadium, west of Taipei (between Taoyuan International Airport and Taipei) was packed: 33,000 attendees.



The goal of the ceremony is to complete the worship of the 15,615 surname ancestors' holy spirits, and to appease the wraiths (specters, spirits) of 3,762 wars: the millions who have died in the thousands of internecine wars between the Chinese over the centuries.

In past five thousand years, Chinese ethnicity have three thousand seven hundred and sixty-two wars which cause the wraiths then [to] divide fifteen thousand six hundred and fifteen ancestors' spirits and the wraiths of eight hundred and sixteen wars of the world. (Weixin Shengjiao 2016a, 9)

The ceremony will allow these spirits to rely upon the heavenly light. It will bless the 15,615 surname ancestors, allowing them to return to the Western Pure Land, attain liberation and achieve Bodhi. The hatred will disappear. The ghosts, wraiths, of the departed must be put at peace. "Resolve grievances and end wars are our destiny and missions of all Three Ancestors descendants" (Weixin Shengjiao 2016a, 10).

Base [sic] on the religious rites, we recited over ten million sutras and dedicate merits to the ancestor spirits. We pray for the spirits to be peaceful, trace the origin and hope all spirits return to their hearts. In order to return to our hearts, we need to rely upon the merciful light of Deities, God, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and Jade Emperor to bless. Buddhas will lead ancestors' spirits, let go of hatred, attain Buddha-nature, liberation and return to the Pure Land. Then together to create Weixin Pure Land at this moment. In order to transcend ancestors' spirits, we must have broad-minded and great wisdom like Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. Then it is possible to summon ancestors' spirits to come to the altar to accept offerings. Wang Chang Lao Zu Da Tian Zun promulgates the heavenly order. And Grand Master Hunyuan Chanshi leads all branch temples, abbots, masters and Weixin virtuous fellows, follow the heavenly order, hold the 12th United Ancestors Worship Ceremony. We practice Dao for the nation and pray for people, for the harmony of the Chinese Nationality. We sincerely pray that all ancestors' spirits let go of hatred, hand in hand, heart to heart, world as a family, together to create eternal world peace. (Weixin Shengjiao 2016a, 9)

Before the actual beginning of the ceremony, Grand Master blessed the food that everyone was going to consume. For several hours, the different groups representing members of WS and active members of society marched from the gate of the stadium to the huge altar, in perfect order. They offered prayers and flowers to the souls of the ancestor. In between prayers and specific rituals, dancers and musicians offered their performances to the ancestors for the great joy of the audience.

In one ritual, a priest elevated an offering in a manner reminiscent of the Catholic eucharist offering. Fiona Chang explained to me:

This is a small cup which contains rice, it's a offering to the spirits (Gods, deities and all sentient beings). The Chinese words 午供 mean 'Lunch Offering.' The ritual is derived from Buddhism, [where] there are three times of offering every day: breakfast, lunch and dinner. This is quite common rite in Buddhism. With the magical power of Buddha, the small bowl of rice can be transformed into immeasurable rice which can feed immeasurable spirits. Offering is very important in Chinese religion, we offer not only rice, but also everything especially fruit, flowers, incenses, cereals... etc, even what we do for glorifying God is a kind of offering. (Fiona Chang, e-mail message to author, March 31, 2017)

Major politicians came to offer their respects to the ancestors. A prayer was read by the master of ceremony, then the politician read a prayer and spoke to the audience. The first politician to appear was Wang Jin-pyng, the former president of the Legislative Yuan (i.e. the parliament, which follows a unicameral system, and one of the five branches of government). He remained in office from 1999 to 2016, a term of record length. What is most important is that he is also a member of the conservative Kuomintang party (KMT), but he is said to be conciliatory and has worked with the Democratic Progressive Party. Then came mainland representatives, local government authorities, judicial and police agency representatives, technology and medical representatives, private associations representatives. The second major political figure to appear was Hung Hsiu-chun, the chair of KMT since March 2016 and the first woman holding that position. Born in 1948, she was vice-president of the Legislative Yuan from 2012 to 2016. She comes from the field of education and has worked towards improving higher education. This connection to the KMT is again very important for WS.

Another major Taiwanese religion, Tienti Teachings, has historically been tied to this party. The Taiwan-headquartered branch of the Tienti religion, Tienti Jiao, was founded in 1980 (following a schism within Tiande Shengjiao, whose origins date back to 19<sup>th</sup> century in Mainland China) by Li Yu-chieh (1901–1994), who was a charismatic figure of KMT. The last (adopted) son of Chiang Kai-shek, Chiang Wei-kuo (1916–1997), often participated in Tienti's activities. Vincent Siew, who served as Vice-President of ROC from 2008 to 2012 and was the first Taiwanese-born Premier of the country (1997–2000), and was also vice-chairman of the KMT, was himself a member of Tienti. All this explains why Tienti is sometimes called "the KMT religion" (Micollier 1998b, 45, Chang 2017).

The third major political figure to appear at Weixin Shengjiao's ceremony was Annette Lu Hsiu-lien, who was Vice-President of ROC from 2000–2008. Born in 1944, she is a member of the Democratic Progressive party. She fought against the authoritarian regime and was sentenced to twelve years in jail for sedition. Thanks to international outrage (notably from Amnesty International) she was released after 5.5 years. She is an important leader of the Taiwan Independence Movement and did not follow the policy of Chen Shui-bian when he was the first Democratic Progressive Party president of ROC from 2000–2008. She is also a prominent feminist activist.

The ceremony was concluded by our turning to the gates opposite the altar to bid farewell to the ancestor spirits and accompany them in their journey while we sang “The Hymn to See Off Our Ancestors”:

All spirits return to hearts, see off our ancestors, merit completed. Now, we are respectfully see off our ancestors to return to the Western Pure Land. And sincerely invite Chairman Grand Master Hunyuan Chanshi to read the See Off Ancestors' Spirits Hymn. We follow the mantra of the Gui Gu Immortal Master Heavenly Virtue Sutra (One bow). The Three Chinese Ancestors' spirits come and go from the Southern Heavenly Gate. (Weixin Shengjiao 2016a, 32)

Once the spirits were safely on their way to Pure Land, the 33,000 participants went back to their cars, or to dozens of buses. We were taken to a good restaurant, as we would be every noon and evening for the week, and we sat at the table of Grand Master or the one next to it, with all the masters of Weixin Shengjiao and our friendly interpreters.

### *Conclusion*

Two points must be added before my concluding comments. First, even if the prime membership of WS is made of Chinese, whether in China, Taiwan, or the diaspora, the group aims also at a much vaster audience: its full name is “Weixin Shengjiao, the New Religion of the World.” Even if it remains modest in size, it has high ambitions. So far, there is only one group in Europe, in Madrid, whose members we met in Taipei. The groups in the USA seem to be expanding, and the large temple in mainland China promises that WS will attract more and more mainland Chinese, and possibly as well Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese, either in their own countries or in their diasporas.

Second, I find particularly interesting the fascination for genealogy exhibited by the group. Reappropriating one's own genealogy is a major feature found in the religions of displaced populations, whether through voluntary or involuntary migrations. In the realm of colonized populations, one thinks of the Ghost Dance, a major millenarian phenomenon of Native Americans. At the end of the world that the adepts are bringing about with their long and slow dance, the souls of the ancestors killed by the Whites will come back on trains. In the Melanesian Cargo cults, believers, bound to their ancestors in a life-death continuum, think cargos are sent by their ancestors to help them against the colonizers. Mormonism is one of the best examples in the West of the recourse to genealogy, in a most technical way, to help members fully accomplish their salvation by reuniting them spiritually to all their ancestors. In a society that has lost and keeps losing its knowledge of the past, and consequently has difficulties in building a coherent future, finding one's ancestors, knowing where one comes from, is reassuring.

Interestingly, in the case of WS, the quest for roots is set at a different level: though private individuals and families ancestors were mentioned during the ceremony, the major ones are the collective ancestors, not the individual ones. Thus, the identity of WS members cannot be individualistic. Happiness can only come to the individuals once they have joined in with the thousands of ancestors of the various lineages issuing from the Emperors.

To conclude more specifically on the links between WS and national identity and politics, we can say that WS does indeed display a political project. This is to be understood on two levels: first, in the narrow sense of the integration of major current Taiwanese politicians in the Ancestors' ceremony, and of the participation of the members in the political life of their country. Second, and more originally, by claiming that it is only through WS that the lost unity of the Chinese nation can be recovered. The religion affirms not only its own superiority over the other religious groups, but also the superiority of its country, Taiwan, as the savior of all the Chinese whose souls were destroyed by the wars over the centuries and by Communism. In so teaching, WS does exhibit a strong millenarian outlook, a feature often linked to stressful conditions as we saw above.

*Sanjiao heyi*, or the harmony of the Three Teachings, forms the strong component of its nationalist project colored with millenarian expectations (Micollier 1998a, 46). Here, millennialism is not to be taken in the biblical sense

(with the scenario from the Book of Revelation in particular), that is, to say with a view of the outside world as decadent, corrupt, impure, and with the expectation of major catastrophes to cleanse the earth and bring about a savior and paradise on earth. Indeed, I have not heard mentions of any form of social decadence. The philosophy developed by Grand Master Hun Yuan and his followers seemed to me most positive and optimistic regarding society at large and the potential of people to succeed in everything they undertake, provided they choose the right tools that WS offers them. Like many East Asian religions, WS is pragmatic and trusts its techniques, whether liturgical or divinatory thanks to I Ching and Feng Shui, to bring about prosperity to its adepts and thus to the rest of society.

Its millenarian expectation is that of the return to the golden age when all the ancestors cohabited, of an age before fighting and grievances and killings separated people and the Chinese ethnic groups in particular. This golden age is what in Buddhism is called Pure Land. Adepts can reach it when they practice the right ceremonies, chant the right sutras, use good I Ching and Feng Shui, and lead a good moral and spiritual life. This individual goal is totally intertwined with the collective need to reach Chinese national, cultural, and genealogical unity. It is this unity that, once realized, will bring a reign of peace on earth:

Weixin Shengjiao fully utilizes ancient Chinese traditional wisdom [I Ching and Feng Shui] to cultivate a pure land in the contemporary Taiwan and hope to bring this achievement and spread it to the whole world. (Weixin Shengjiao 2016b, 17)

The strategy of WS consists in revivifying the culture and the spirituality of Greater China. Taiwanese must fight to preserve the autonomy of ROC, and even declare their independence to the world. It was fitting to see that the politicians who were invited to participate in the January 1<sup>st</sup> ceremony all seemed to be pro-independence (as far as I could judge from reading the biography of Wang Jin-pyng, Annette Lu Hsiu-lien, and Hung Hsiu-chun).

As in many religions, in WS spirituality is inseparable from politics in the broad sense, since in order to take care of the spiritual and material well-being of its people, any religious group must also address the general conditions in which they live. In his report *WS Future Outlook*, Master Yuan-Dao clearly states that proper spirituality will bring about prosperity, which in turn will put an end to wars:

The true meaning of world peace is to let every family have three meals to consume daily, and have no worries of every day clothing, foods, housing and commute. There will be no hunger and wars, the world in peace and the world as a family. (Yuan Dao 2017, 17)

We can classify the world mankind into two categories: one is on salary basis: government workers, militaries, public officials, teachers, business and industry workers, the second category: the bosses who give employees salaries. They are the owners of all kinds of businesses. They are Buddha reincarnations and they have the special wisdom and predestined relationship. They can at every place and every region create businesses to provide clothing, foods... They can create profits. They will pay taxes to the government and the government will pay salaries ... to take care of the common people and let the country and society see peace. (Yuan Dao 2017, 18)

Yet, in Taiwan prosperity remains endangered by cross-Strait threats. The solution devised by the founder is thus to put an end to those tensions by strengthening the bonds between the people living on the two sides of the Straits.

We see, then, that WS functions like several religions that build nationalism into their theology. In America, Mormonism is again one of the best examples, but we can think of the current movements with the Russian Orthodox Church or also with the Hindu nationalist political parties in India. This “national messianism” implies that a nation endows itself with a specific mission, not only to save its own people but to be a beacon, a model, for the rest of the world.

In the case of WS, it is clear that its members can only be reassured that they are on the right side of the Straits, since their Holy Ancestors, who have now been subsumed in Grand Master Hun Yuan, do protect them in their island. And it is clear for them as well that ROC is endowed with qualities far superior to those of the People’s Republic of China: they do experience on a daily basis true democracy, freedom of religion, social progressivism, a better climate, less pollution, and so on. They must consequently be comforted that they have made the right decision when they came to settle in Taiwan. Because of its integration of Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese genealogies within the broad Chinese genealogy, WS contributes to the construction of ROC as the better nation, in a most fascinating project of national messianism.

## References

- Chang, Hsin-Fang Fiona. 2016. "Nationalities and the World, the Three Teachings (三教), and the Way of Change (易道) – Religious Connotations of Taiwan's Weixinshengjiao (唯心聖教) and South Korea's Daesoonjinrihoe (大巡真理會)." Paper presented at the CESNUR 2016 International Conference, Daejin University, Pocheon City, Korea, July 5–10. Accessed August 19, 2017. [http://www.cesnur.org/2016/daejin\\_chang.pdf](http://www.cesnur.org/2016/daejin_chang.pdf).
- Chang, Hsin-Fang Fiona. 2017. "Orthodoxy and Lineage: The National Ideology of I-Kuan Tao, Tientijiao and Weixin Shengjiao in Taiwan." Paper presented at the CESNUR 2017 International Conference, The Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, Jerusalem, Israel, July 2–6.
- Huang, Chun-Zhi. 2016. *Promoter of World Peace Grand Master Huen-Yuan: How Propagating Chinese Culture Contributes to World Peace*. Taichung City (Taiwan): Wei Xin Zong Cultural Communication Co. Ltd.
- Hun Yuan (Grand Master). 2016a. *The New Religion of the World Taiwan Weixin Shengjiao*. Guoxing (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Hsien-Fo Temple of Chan-Chi Mountain; New Taipei City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Charity Foundation; and Nantou City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao College.
- Hun Yuan (Grand Master) (Hunyuan Chansi). 2016b. "The Origin of the Dharma." In *Weixin Shengjiao* 2016a, 2–7.
- Introvigne, Massimo. 2016. "Weixin Shengjiao." *World Religions and Spirituality Project*, November 10. Accessed August 17, 2017. <https://wrldrels.org/2016/11/12/weixin-shengjiao/>.
- Introvigne, Massimo. 2017. "Grand Master Hun Yuan." *World Religions and Spirituality Project*, October 25. Accessed November 8, 2017. <https://wrldrels.org/2017/10/25/grand-master-hun-yuan/>.
- Jordan, David K. and Daniel L. Overmyer. 1986. *The Flying Phoenix: Aspects of Chinese Sectarianism in Taiwan*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Micollier, Evelyne. 1998a. "Les nouvelles religions dans la société taïwanaise: recomposition des faits religieux et pratiques de santé." *Perspectives chinoises* 46:29–36.
- Micollier, Evelyne. 1998b. "Recomposition des faits religieux et tensions identitaires à Taïwan: l'exemple de la 'nouvelle religion' Yiguan dao." *Perspectives chinoises* 48:41–47.
- Micollier, Evelyne. 2007. "Qigong et 'nouvelles religions' en Chine et à Taïwan: instrumentalisation politique et processus de légitimation des pratiques." *Autrepart* 42(2):127–144.

- Rigal-Cellard, Bernadette. 2017. "The Strategies Devised by Religions in Order to Promote Peace in the World: Christian and East Asian Dialogues and Interactions." Paper presented at the 1<sup>st</sup> World Sangsaeng Forum, Pocheon City, Korea, October 14–15.
- Schak, David & Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao. 2005 "Les organisations bouddhistes socialement engagées à Taïwan." *Perspectives chinoises* 88:45–58.
- Vermander, Benoît. 1995. "Religions in Taiwan Today." *China News Analysis* 1538-1539:1–15.
- Vermander, Benoît. 1998. "Religions in Taiwan: Between Mercantilism and Millenarianism." *Japanese Religions* 23(1–2):111–123.
- Wallace, Anthony F.C. 1956. "Revitalization Movements." *American Anthropology* 58:264–281.
- Wallace, Anthony F.C. 1966. *Religion: An Anthropological View*. New York: Random House.
- Weixin Shengjiao 2016a. *The International New Religion Interaction Forum of Weixin Shengjiao, December 31, 2016 – January 6, 2017* (Complete program of the Ancestors' Ceremony and several articles). Guoxing (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Hsien-Fo Temple of Chan-Chi Mountain; and New Taipei City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Charity Foundation.
- Weixin Shengjiao. 2016b. 2017. *The International New Religion Interaction Forum of WS, 2017/01/04*. (Complete program of the week's activities for international scholars). Guoxing (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Hsien-Fo Temple of Chan-Chi Mountain; and New Taipei City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Charity Foundation.
- Yuan-Dao (Master). 2017. "Weixin Shengjiao Future Outlook." Paper presented at The International New Religion Interaction Forum of Weixin Shengjiao, Taichung (Taiwan), January 4. Manuscript, 24 p.



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

Fiona Hsin-Fang Chang  
*National Chengchi University*  
fiona.taiwan@gmail.com

**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 Chiyao 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 Chiyao 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 Chiyao) 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 Xiantiandao 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*.

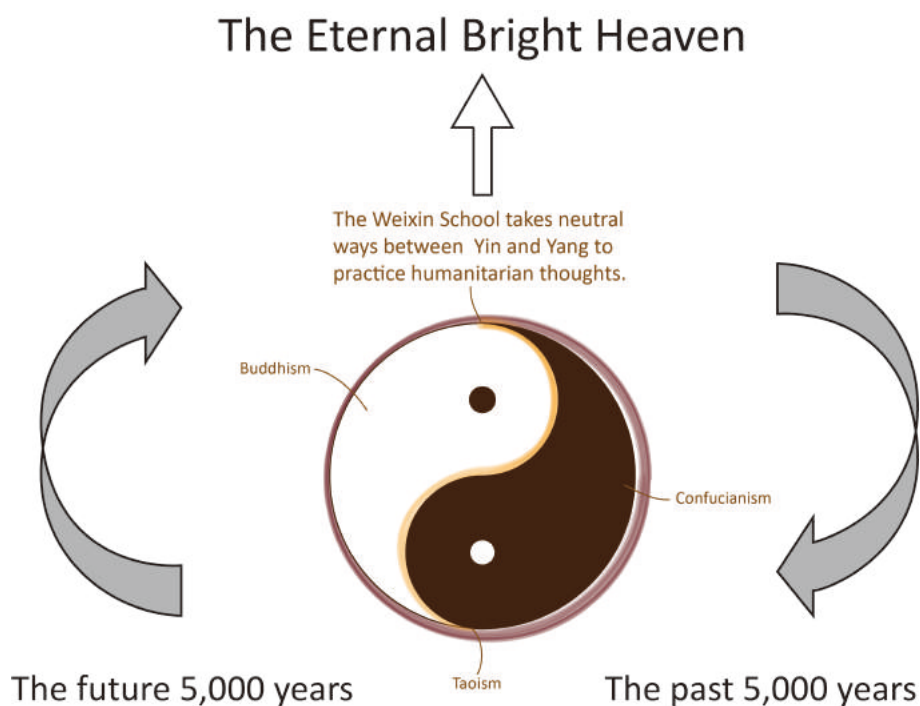
A scripture that is part of Weixin Shengjiao’s canon, the *Feng Shui Sutra* (風水真經), points out that “Feng Shui is the only way to understand emptiness and form in Buddhism. Feng is emptiness and Shui is form.” “Faith in the profound Feng Shui of the universe will build a pure land of Buddhism in the 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 Jeungsan. Kang himself predicted that one true heir would appear to propagate his teachings, and the movement interprets the prediction as referred to both Jo Jeongsan 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.

## References

- Chan, Shih-Chuang. 2014. “大巡「典經」的公事考論” (On the Jeonkyeong of Daesoon Jinrihoe). *The Journal of Daesoon Academy of Sciences* 23:77–105.
- Chang, Hsin-Fang Fiona. 2014. “唯心聖教的經典、教義與實踐—以《唯心聖教安心真經》為主” (Scriptures, Teachings, and Practices of Weixin Shengjiao: The Perfect Scripture for Calming the Mind). Master’s Thesis, National Chenchi University, Taipei.
- Chiu, Hei-Yuan. 2001. “解嚴、宗教自由與宗教發展” (Lifting Martial Law, Religious Freedom, and Development of Religions). In *威權體制的變遷：解嚴後的台灣* (The Transformation of an Authoritarian Regime: Taiwan in the Post-Martial Law Era), edited by Academia Sinica Committee for Promotion of Taiwan Studies, 249–276. Taipei (Taiwan): Preparatory Office for the Institute of Taiwan History of Academia Sinica.
- Chiu, Hei-Yuan. 2006. *宗教、術數與社會變遷* (Religion, Art of Numbers, and Social Changes). Taipei (Taiwan): Laureate.
- Chou, Ke-Chin. 2002. “戰後國民政府與儒家思想：西學為體、中學為用？” (The Nationalist Government and Confucianism in Postwar Taiwan: Western Learning as Substance, Chinese Learning as Means?). In *臺灣的文化發展：世紀之交的省思* (The Development of Taiwan’s Culture: Reflections at the Turn of the Century), edited by Huang Chun-Chieh and Ho Chi-Peng, 59–90. Taipei: National Taiwan University Press.
- Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department. 2010. *典經*



- Jeonkyeong* (Chinese version). Yeosu (Korea): Daesoonjinrihoe Publishing Department).
- Huang, Chun-Chi. 2002. 鬼谷子心法在台灣 (Heart Dharma of Guiguzi in Taiwan: Introduction). Nantou (Taiwan): Chinese Pure Land Merit Foundation.
- Huang, Chun-Chi. 2009. 中華三祖文化在台灣的弘揚 (Propagation of Three Chinese Ancestors Culture in Taiwan). Taichung (Taiwan): Weixin Zong Nan Tian Cultural Center.
- Huang, Chun-Chieh. 2006. 臺灣意識與臺灣文化 (Taiwan Consciousness and Taiwan Culture). Taipei (Taiwan): National Taiwan University Press.
- Hun Yuan (Grand Master). [2005] 2013. 風水真經 (Feng Shui Sutra). Guoxing (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao I-Key Publishing House.
- Hun Yuan (Grand Master). 2016. *The New Religion of the World Taiwan Weixin Shengjiao*. Guoxing (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Hsien-Fo Temple of Chan-Chi Mountain; New Taipei City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Charity Foundation; and Nantou City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao College.
- Huo, Ke-Kung, and Jin Xun. 2012. “大巡真理會”五教合一”思想與道教”三教合一”思想比較研究” (Comparative Study of Daesoon Jinrihoe’s “Unity of Five Teachings” and Taoism’s “Unity of Three Teachings”). In 道與東方文化——東亞道文化國際學術研討會論文集 (Taoism and Eastern Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference on East Asian Taoist Culture), edited by Jin Xun, 340–348. Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher.
- Jin, Xun. 2006. 韓國新宗教的源流與嬗變 (Origins and Changes of South Korea’s New Religions). Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher.
- Lee, Gyung-Won. 2014. “東亞新宗教的三教合一論之比較研究” (Comparative Study of Unity of Three Teachings in New Religions of East Asia). In 東亞新宗教國際研討會論文集 (Proceedings of the International Conference on New Religion in East Asia), 113–135. Taipei: National Chengchi University.
- Lee, Gyung-Won, and Nam-Sik Ko. 2012. “關於大巡真理會《典經》的概要及繼承宗統的考察” (Summary of Daesoon Jinrihoe’s *Daesoon Jeonkyeong* and Observation of its Lineal System). In 道與東方文化——東亞道文化國際學術研討會論文集 (Taoism and Eastern Culture: Proceedings of the International Conference on East Asian Taoist Culture), edited by Jin Xun, 142–160. Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher.
- Li, Tie-Pi. 2002. 八字問答 (Q&A of the Eight Characters). Taipei: Yihchyun.
- Lu, Chi-Ming. 2009. 韓國民族宗教運動史 (History of South Korea’s National Religious Movement). Beijing: Chinese Social Science Press.
- Park, Maria. 2012. “大巡真理會與道教之信仰體系的比較” (Comparison of the Daesoon Jinrihoe and Taoism Religious Systems). In 道與東方文化——東亞道文化國際學術研討會論文集 (Taoism and Eastern Culture: Proceedings of the

- International Conference on East Asian Taoist Culture), edited by Jin Xun, 238–257. Beijing: China Religious Culture Publisher.
- Schipper, Kristofer. 2002. 中華文化基因庫 (Chinese Culture Gene Store-room). Beijing: Peking University.
- Yang, Ch'ing K'un. [1961] 2016. 中国社会中的宗教：宗教的现代社会功能与其历史因素之研究 (Religion in Chinese Society: A Study of Contemporary Social Functions of Religion and Some of Their Historical Factors). Reprint. Chengdu (Sichuan): Sichuan People's Publishing House.

## A Comparison Between Daesoon Jinrihoe's "Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence" and Weixin Shengjiao's "Resolving Grievances to Make Life Harmonious"

Taesoo Kim

*Seoul National University*

tskim1003@daum.net

**ABSTRACT:** The article compares two parallel concepts, "resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence" in Daesoon Jinrihoe, one of Korea's largest new religions, and "resolving grievances to make life harmonious" in the Taiwanese new religion Weixin Shengjiao. Exploring the two concepts show their similarities, as both are grounded in a sacred history and emphasize ancient grievances of ancestral times. Differences, however, also emerge. Daesoon Jinrihoe's resolution of grievances is based on the idea of the "Reordering of the Universe (Heaven and Earth)," performed by the Supreme God, Sangje, incarnated on Earth as Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909). Weixin Shengjiao places more emphasis on the individual solutions of grievances based on the practical aspects of *I Ching*, i.e. divination and Feng Shui. Both religions see themselves as including the Three Teachings of Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism, but Weixin Shengjiao seems to rely more on Buddhist sources, while Daesoon Jinrihoe, which also has some Buddhist features, seems to share more elements with Daoism and Confucianism.

**KEYWORDS:** Daesoon Jinrihoe, Kang Jeungsan, Reordering of the Universe, Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence, Weixin Shengjiao, Resolving Grievances to Make Life Harmonious, Hun Yuan, I Ching, Chinese Folk Religion, Weixinism.

### *Introduction*

On January 1, 2017, I went to Taipei's Linkou Stadium to participate in the 12<sup>th</sup> United Chinese Nationality Ancestors Worship Ceremony, organized by the Taiwanese new religion Weixin Shengjiao. It was a very impressive event, held to worship the three Chinese ancestors: Chiyu (蚩尤), the Yellow Emperor (黃帝), and the Yan Emperor (炎帝 神農氏, Shennong Shi), as the origin and the founders of the Chinese nation.

In several places of China, including in the Henan province, I had visited monuments or museums commemorating the Yellow Emperor, the Yan Emperor, and Fuxi Shi (伏羲氏), the Emperor of Heaven, Earth and Humans, or the three sovereigns and the five emperors Diku (帝嚳高辛氏), Zhuan Xu (顓頊高陽氏), Tang Yao (帝堯陶唐氏), Yu Shun (帝舜有虞氏), and Shao Hao (少昊金天氏), either together or separately. What was distinctive in the January 1, 2017 ceremony, however, was that Grand Master Hun Yuan, the founder of Weixin Shengjiao, proposed to remedy an ancestral injustice by rehabilitating Chiyou, once regarded as a villain in traditional mythology, and venerating him as one of the three ancestors of the Chinese people. As a Korean, I remembered how Chiyou was adopted as one of the most famous symbols of the 2002 Korean-Japanese World Cup of Soccer. Koreans think that Chiyou is one of their ancestors, who led the Jiuyi (九夷) or Jiuli (九黎) tribes with the help of the deities of wind and rain (Yuan 1979, 441–475; Yilyeon 1993, 38–54).

One of my major areas of interest at that time revolved around the *Jeongyeong*, the cardinal scripture of Daesoon Jinrihoe (大巡眞理會), a new religious movement that began at the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century in Korea. In this sacred scripture, Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958), regarded by Daesoon Jinrihoe as its founder, depicts the Yellow Emperor as one of the official initiators of all civilizations recorded in history, and describes how he was followed by the five emperors (*Kyowun* 1:26). This is also related to the veneration and worship of ancestors. I also noticed how the idea of “resolving grievances to make life harmonious” (*jieyuan hesheng*, 解冤和生), advocated by Grand Master Hun Yuan, had many aspects in common with the notion of “resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence” (*haewon sangsaeng*, 解冤相生) in Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Because the idea of “resolving grievances” plays an important role in the doctrines of both religious movements, this article will focus on this concept, by comparing their respective interpretations by Weixin Shengjiao and Daesoon Jinrihoe. Weixin Shengjiao would probably recognize itself in the central moral principles of what the Korean new religion calls the “Daesoon Thought,” and in turn Daesoon Jinrihoe would agree with Grand Master Hun Yuan’s idea of “resolving grievances to make life harmonious.” However, the context of Daesoon Jinrihoe is based on its notion of the “Reordering Works of the Universe” (天地公事), a series of “Works” performed by the Supreme God, Sangje

Kang, to rectify the previous order of Heaven and Earth into a new state characterized by universal reconciliation among human beings and the world.

I would suggest that the two religions share significant similarities in their traditions, while also revealing differences in their way of approaching the concept of “resolving grievances.” Weixin Shengjiao approaches this concept from the perspective of resolving individual grievances through persuading evil spirits to leave this world or driving them away. Daesoon Jinrihoe regards the resolution of grievances, in its practical aspect, as the ethical attitude and duty of each individual human being. In addition, the resolution of grievances is understood as a natural principle of the universe, based on the Reordering Works of the Universe performed by the Supreme God, Sangje (上帝). Although “Sangje” is an ancient name for the Supreme Being in East Asian religious traditions, Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that he incarnated in a Korean spiritual master called Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909).

I will first introduce the Daesoon concept of the “resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence.” Second, I will describe the general characteristics of Weixin Shengjiao’s idea of “resolving grievances to make life harmonious.” Finally, I will propose a comparison between these two systems of thoughts.

### *The Idea of the “Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence” in Daesoon Thought*

According to an inscription explaining the name “Daesoon Jinrihoe” in the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex of the religion, “Daesoon Truth” is the universal principle, which has been handed down throughout the centuries up to the present time:

All things pertain to the mysterious function of Tai Ji (太極), and many saints came down to the Earth to convey the universal truth to save all humankind. For instance, those who came down as kings were Fuxi (伏羲), Dangun (檀君), and Wenwang (文王), and those who came down as teachers were Confucius, Buddha, Lao-tze, and our Holy Teacher Kang Jeungsan in the modern period.

In the scripture of Daesoon Jinrihoe (*Jeongyeong*), there is also a passage that explains the historical role of Huangdi (the Yellow Emperor) and Chiyu in the early stage of East Asian history:

When there is a person who wages war, there is a person to calm it down. Since Chiyou waged a war while creating a fog, Huangdi suppressed it with a south-pointing chariot [i.e. a chariot equipped with a magnetic needle]. All those who wage wars, and suppress them, do so in accordance with the mysterious works of heaven. Accordingly, Choe Jewu was one who motivated war, and I [Kang Jeungsan] am the one who will suppress it. Jeon Myeongsuk has waged war in the world. (*Kyobeop* 3:30)

Choe Jewu (1824–1864) was the founder of the early Korean new religion Donghak. After his execution in 1864, a protest movement escalated to the bloody Donghak Revolution of 1894, led by Jeon Myeongsuk (Jeong Bong-jun, 1855–1895), who in turn was executed in 1895. Kang Jeungsan, regarded by Daesoon Jinrihoe as both the incarnation of the Supreme God, Sangje, and the origin of Daesoon Thought, counseled his followers not to participate in the Donghak Revolution, predicting its failure. In the above passage, Kang explains the historical clash between the Yellow Emperor and Chiyou from a viewpoint wherein they play different roles within the broader context of the grand design by Sangje, the Supreme God (i.e. Kang himself), to resolve century-old grievances and convert the world into an earthly paradise free of war and conflict. Following his work through the religious ritual called the Reordering of the Universe, the principle of mutual beneficence was introduced by Kang as the remedy for curing the diseases caused by grievances.

To realize mutual beneficence, Kang Jeungsan gave primacy to the resolution of grievances (冤), accompanied by a principle of reciprocity in his Reordering of the Universe. Likewise, with reference to social ethics in the sphere of everyday life, he affirmed the principles of not provoking *cheok* (i.e. emotional grudges by others) and making fellow human beings prosperous, while harmonizing disputes by following the Divine Dao (神道).

In the *Jeongyeong*, the expression “the Age of the Resolution of Grievances” is frequently used in the context of Kang Jeungsan’s Reordering Works of the Universe. We read, for example:

I will conduct the Reordering Works of the Universe to resolve the piled-up grievances from older times, while eliminating unfortunate events, to achieve eternal peace. Like the whole body moves when one scratches one’s head, if we resolve the grievances of Danzhu, who is the starting point of the record of humankind as well as the first chapter in the history of grievances, then the knots and pains of grievances, piled up for thousand years, will be resolved. When Yao, considering Danzhu an unworthy son, gave his two daughters to Xun and passed the world to him, Danzhu caused Xun to die in the river of Cangwu (蒼梧), and

his two queens to die in the river of Xiaoxiang (瀟湘). From this time on, the roots of grievances were embedded in the world, and the seeds of grievances were spread to each generation, until grievances filled Heaven and Earth and humanity was left on the brink of ruin. (*Gongsa* 3:4)

The different ancestral deities make their descendants dedicated in their spiritual cultivation, by extricating them from their *cheok* spirits, facing the current time of the Resolution of Grievances. (*Gyobeop* 2:14)

As this is the Age of the Resolution of Grievances, practice virtue and treat others properly. (*Gyobeop* 2:20)

In these words, we can see that the “Age of the Resolution of Grievances” contrasts with “the Age of the Former World” (先天), where all the grievances had formed and piled up, and human beings and the universe in general were governed by mutual conflict. While the Age of the Former World was the period of creating and bearing grievances, the Age of the Resolution of Grievances, achieved through Sangje’s Reordering Works of the Universe, can be defined as a transitional age leading into the Later World (後天) of mutual beneficence, which is an earthly paradise.

According to Sangje’s teaching, the social classes such as shaman, female, and the lowly, who were afflicted with alienation, discrimination, and exclusion in the Former World under the principle of mutual conflict, gain release from these fetters, acquire power, and enter into the Age of the Resolution of Grievances.

As this is the Age of the Resolution of Grievances, at first, I will deliver the teaching to the lowly. (*Gyowun* 1:32)

Faced with the Age of the Resolution of Grievances, those who do not have prestige will earn vigor, and energy will be returned to the deserted Earth. (*Gyobeop* 1:67)

I (Sangje) let all be free to do as they wish, by eliminating the discrimination between men and women, but from now on, I reestablish the principle of propriety by rectifying the moral disorder of Yin and Yang. (*Gongsa* 1:32)

Kang (Sangje) always used honorific language, even when addressing himself to individuals of low birth. One of his first disciples, Kim Hyeong-ryeol (1862–1932), felt embarrassed when he heard Kang using honorific language when addressing Kim’s servant. Yet, Kang advised Kim as follows:

That man is your servant, but wherein should that fact alter my interactions with him? You should respect all people, whoever they may be. Hereafter, there will be no discrimination between the noble and the low, or legitimate and illegitimate children. (*Gyobeop* 1:10)

With reference to this, Kang (Sangje) also offered the following explanation:

This is the Age of the Resolution of Grievances, and good times will come through resolving *cheok*, when people will discard the conventions of noblemen while giving preferential treatment to the lowly. (*Gyobeop* 1:9)

It should be noted that “resolution of grievances” does not mean that those oppressed in the past would now wield the power at their will, nor would they dominate others as a retaliation for past discrimination or injustice. Kang taught that one should always repay evil with good and treat others properly.

Facing the times of the Resolution of Grievances, you should repay evil with good. (*Gyobeop* 3:15)

Resolve the grudges your enemy holds against you and love him as your savior, then he will turn into a virtuous human being and become your fortune. (*Gyobeop* 1:56)

Our work is a *gongbu* (practice, 工夫) not to incur *cheok* and promote the betterment of others. Taking the remaining good fortune would be sufficient, after you have made all the others prosperous. (*Gyobeop* 1:2)

It is believed that, through his Reordering Works of the Universe, Kang, as the incarnated Supreme God Sangje, resolved grievances of all sorts, ranging from the grudges of kings and revolutionaries to those of several deities. For instance, Sangje resolved the grievances of Jeong Bong-jun (*Gongsa* 3:2), Choe Jewu (*Gongsa* 3:2), Jinmuk (1562–1633, *Gwonji* 2:37), Danzhu (*Gongsa* 3:6, *Haengrok* 3:4), Qin Shi-Huangdi (the first emperor of the Qin dynasty, 259–210 BCE), and those of a number of deities (*Gyowun* 1:17). He also remedied the grievances of the spirits of rebels, who were previously marked with eternally indelible dishonor, while dispatching them to a celestial star (*Gyobeop* 3:6).

Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that Sangje conducted a coordination and reorganization of the deities according to their deeds and achievements in contributing to the supreme good of humankind. He also conducted the resolution of personal grudges caused by failed ambition, jealousy, or obsession. Even those general resolutions of personal grievances were included in his great plan to open the Earthly Paradise of the Later World of mutual beneficence. Likewise, regardless of the aims or intentions the actions that led to grudges originally contained, Kang resolved all grievances, while allowing all those involved to participate in the Reordering Works. This, Daesoon Jinrihoe believes, was Kang’s way to fulfill the idea of mutual beneficence, in order to promote the betterment of people and spirits. In turn, the result of the resolution



of grievances for those involved in the process was that Sangje allowed them to take part in his Reordering Works of the Universe and creation of the Earthly Paradise. He also resolved the grievances of specific historical characters:

Jeon Myeongsook [Jeong Bong-jun] initiated the Donghak peasant movement in the spirit of making peasants noblemen and making men of low birth noble. (*Gyobeop* 1:2)

By proclaiming the Eastern Dao, Choi Suwun [Choe Jewu] endeavored to propagate the Great Way (Dao) while receiving the heavenly mandate and the teachings of the deities. (*Gongsä* 3:2)

Jinmuk went up to Heaven, so that he could learn all the ingenious teachings of Heaven and pass them onto human beings, but he was killed by the jealous Confucian scholar, Kim Bongok [1575–1661]. (*Gwonji* 2:37)

Kang, as the incarnated Sangje, went on to conduct the Reordering Work to resolve the collective grievances of several nations, and this included the “Resolution of the Grievances of China” (*Gongsä* 3:18). He proclaimed that “since China had been invaded by other ethnic groups and tribes repeatedly, the time has come for China to recover its national sovereignty.” It is worth noting here that Weixin Shengjiao also proposes the resolution of the grievances of Chinese ancestors, including those belonging to ethnic minorities, something that is presented as crucial for the resolution of cross-Straits problems between Taiwan and China. This resolution is believed to eventually contribute to peace and harmony in the whole world. In relation to this issue, the main ideas of Weixin Shengjiao will be treated in more detail in the next chapter.

### *Weixin Shengjiao’s Notion of “Resolving Grievances to Make Life Harmonious”*

We have seen how “the Divine Way for the Resolution of Grievances,” is an essential part of Sangje’s (i.e. Kang Jeungsan’s) Reordering of the Universe in Daesoon Jinrihoe. Weixin Shengjiao also expresses a view of the Divine Way in relation to the “redressing of wrongs” or the “resolution of grievances,” not only at the individual level, but also at the collective level of resolving the grievances of national ancestral origins (Lee 2013, 38).

Yet, whereas Daesoon Thought traces the starting point of all human grievances back to the grievance of Danzhu, who was the son of the Yao Emperor (*Haengrok* 3:4), Weixin Shengjiao locates it in the Battle of Zhuolu. The Yan Emperor, leading his tribe, battled the Nine Li tribes, led by Chiyu. The Yan

Emperor stood no chance, and he lost the battle. He escaped, and later ended up in Zhuolu, begging for help from the Yellow Emperor (Dai and Gong 2003, 32). Then, the epic battle between Chiyou and the Yellow Emperor's forces began. The battle lasted for ten years, with Chiyou having the upper hand. During the Battle of Zhuolu, Chiyou breathed out a thick fog and obscured the sunlight (Woolf 2007, 213; Wang 2006, 11–12). The battle dragged on, for four days, and the Yellow Emperor's side was in danger of losing. Then, the Yellow Emperor invented the south-pointing chariot, and found his way out of the dangerous battlefield. Chiyou conjured up a heavy storm. The Yellow Emperor called upon the drought demon, Nüba (女魃), who blew away the storm clouds and cleared the battlefield. Chiyou and his army could not hold up, and all were later killed by the Yellow Emperor (Wang 2006, 11–13).

Weixin Shengjiao assumes as its mission to rectify the injustice of the historians in their treatment of Chiyou. In the *Classic of Mountains and Seas* (Shanhai Jing, 山海經), there are several stories delineating the war between Chiyou and the Yellow Emperor, Huangdi:

When Chiyou invaded Huangdi with his troops, Huangdi ordered the Ying Dragon (應龍) to attack Chiyou in the field of Jizhou (冀州). The Ying Dragon attempted to stop Chiyou by preventing his access to water, yet Chiyou asked the deities of wind and rain to rage a great rainstorm. By dispatching the heavenly lady Ba to stop rain, Huangdi was able to kill Chiyou at last. Then, from the blood being stained in the shackles and handcuffs used for tying up Chiyou, a red maple tree was born. (Yuan 1979, 441–475; Sima 2004, 1–48)

Another version reads like this:

Chiyou, with the giants, the Jiuli tribes, and evil spirits, rebelled against the Yellow Emperor at Zhuolu plains. Both sides used magical powers, but Chiyou had the advantage of forged swords and halberds. Using his powers, Chiyou covered the battlefield with thick fog. Only with the help of a south-pointing chariot using a magnetic compass, could Huangdi's [i.e. the Yellow Emperor's] troops find their way through the mist. He also used his daughter, Nüba, the Drought Demon, to harm Chiyou's troops. Later on, Chiyou suffered more defeats and was captured. Only the Ying Dragon, the winged dragon, being a brave servant of the Yellow Emperor, dared to slay him. Chiyou's chains were transformed into oaks, while the Ying Dragon was cursed to remain on Earth forever. And later, Chiyou was worshipped as a war god and an inventor of metal weapons as a nemesis of Huangdi. (Yuan 1979, 441–475)

Yet, in the *Biographic Sketches of Five Emperors*, a part of the *Shiji* (Chronicles), the record is as follows:

When the world became agitated by Shennong's declining influence, Huangdi went on to conquer the feudal lords all across the country. Yet, since Chiyou was strong and powerful, Huangdi could not conquer him. Having re-organized his coalition, Huangdi subjugated the Yan Emperor in the battle of Banquan. Yet, when Chiyou promoted a rebellion without submitting to this threat, Huangdi assembled the military and feudal lords, and killed Chiyou in the battle of Zhuolu, and then acceded to the imperial throne replacing Shennong. (Lin 2009, 39–67)

In Chinese mythology, Chiyou is a villain and a tyrant who defeated the Yan Emperor, but was in turn defeated by the Yellow Emperor in the epic battle of Zhuolu, traditionally thought to have occurred around the 26<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Chiyou, however, is worshipped by Weixin Shengjiao together with the other two great ancestors (Introvigne 2016). This seeming anomaly has been explained by Taiwanese scholar, Fiona Chang, who suggests that Chiyou is believed to be the ancestor of Chinese ethnic minorities (Chang 2016, 8). Through his worship, these minorities are also incorporated into the movement's grand project of reconciliation.

Tracing the origin of grievances back to the tragic affair of Chiyou, Weixin Shengjiao's Grand Master Hun Yuan proposes to rehabilitate this ancestor, while redressing the historical injustices and wrongs done to him. According to Lee Fong-Mao, in October 2015, Grand Master Hun Yuan carried out his plan to rehabilitate Ancestor Chiyou in line with the other two ancestors, and completed Zhuolu's Three Ancestors Culture Park in Hebei, China. He also built there a Three Ancestors Culture Museum, as well as the Altar of Joining the Talismans and the Three Ancestors Culture Museum. The Three Ancestor's Halls, including the Yellow Emperor Palace, the Yan Emperor Temple, and the Chiyou Shrine, were constructed thanks to Grand Master Hun Yuan's mobilization of Weixin Shengjiao's resources (Lee 2013, 22).

In 2006, Grand Master Hun Yuan founded the Wei Xin College of Buddhist Chants to train ritual specialists capable of leading dharma services. He stated that one of his main motivations for establishing this institution was "looking after the realms of both life and death." Weixin Shengjiao's rituals honor the ancestors, starting with the Three Great Ancestors and Guiguzi, who are also enshrined in temples in Taiwan and China (Introvigne 2016). According to Hsieh, ancestor worship can be taken as evidence of the group's "authentic participation in time-honored traditions" (Hsieh 2015, 33).

Through the rehabilitation of Chiyou, Grand Master Hun Yuan advocates the concept of “resolving grievances,” while attempting to appease the collective grievances of national ancestors. In fact, the principle of “resolving grievances and making life harmonious” is one of the major religious tenets of his religious movement. Grand Master Hun Yuan received several messages about rectifying injustices in the Chinese ancestral heritage from Guiguzi. According to Hsieh, Guiguzi was recorded in the *Records of the Grand Historian* as the teacher of the late Warring States political lobbyists Su Qin (蘇奏) and Zhang Yi (張儀), both famous strategists active around 400 BCE (Hsieh 2015, 28). Guiguzi was deified in China well before Weixin Shengjiao, and is regarded in the movement as an incarnation of the Immortal Master Wang Chan Lao Zu. Speaking through Grand Master Hun Yuan, Guiguzi advised:

The maleficent deeds of the past bears [sic] bad fruits of today, reincarnations not swayed in its path. The ancestors of the dead are deceased, now on monuments we worship. (Hun Yuan 2016, 168)

And he went on to instruct:

To solve conflicts, one should search its [sic] roots, and find a point of balance of the spiritual life from the Three Ancestors of Chinese. Look for the past, the present and the future. This is the Bai He Principle. (Hun Yuan 2016, 168)

On November 15, 2016, Grand Master Hun Yuan reaffirmed Guiguzi’s teaching as follows:

The Three Ancestors of Chinese were of one root, worship ceremonies are the start of the melting pot of Chinese cultures. If we look objectively at history, there are many tests in history, but if we let go of the stubbornness in history and the bipolar criticisms and set poles again, then society will be more harmonious. (Hun Yuan 2016, 168)

In 2004, to practice the idea of “resolving grievances and making life harmonious,” Grand Master Hun Yuan started to hold the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Chinese Joint Ancestor Worship Ceremonies, by gathering 36,000 “representatives of the three Chinese ancestors” every year. Weixin Shengjiao claims that the ceremony resolves the grievances between Chiyou and the other ancestors. It also commemorates the ancestors of 15,615 Chinese families (via their family names), those who died in 3,762 wars, 917 emperors, Xu Fu and his descendant, the 124<sup>th</sup> emperor of Japan, the 195 members of the imperial family in Korea, and the innocent dead in 816 wars and battles (Hun Yuan 2016, 169).

Further, by tracing the origin of the dharma to the Three Emperors, Grand Master Hun Yuan insists that the practice of resolving grievances through ancestor worship is a starting point for world peace and harmony, the beginning of Chinese consolidation and respect.

It is the time for Chinese people to establish a Pure Land together. (...) Chinese have the same root, so worshipping ancestors is the beginning of Chinese culture. Chinese people have to observe history and put aside polemic criticism. Then society will be more peaceful. (Hun Yuan 2016, 68)

Likewise, Grand Master Hun Yuan regards the ancestor worship ceremony as the starting point of world peace and harmony. He claims that the ceremony contributes to harmonizing disputes, and would eventually lead to the establishment of the Pure Land.

Why, however, is ancestor worship so important for Weixin Shengjiao, and how can this practice lead people to the Pure Land? On what grounds or principles can ancestor worship contribute to world peace? Grand Master Hun Yuan's first answer to this difficult question seems to be that his movement is not merely a creation of humans. It was established by Heaven and Earth, and its tenets were revealed by divine sages, particularly Wang Chan Lao Zu (Guiguzi).

Second, Grand Master Hun Yuan offers a genealogical tree of his doctrine, from the mythical Chinese ancestor Fuxi Shi, who reputedly taught the natural principles both of the Eight Trigrams (Bagua, 八卦) of the Earlier Heaven and of *Wuji* (無極), which is identified with emptiness. *Wuji* is a Daoist notion, and the word can be roughly translated as “nothingness.” When Buddhism was initially introduced to China, many Chinese confused the meaning of emptiness in Buddhism with the Daoist concept of nothingness or *Wuji*, although the two notions are not the same. Weixin Shengjiao appears to be aware of this criticism by scholars of Buddhism, yet it still equates (Buddhist) emptiness and *Wuji*, as it aspires to offer a synthesis of Buddhism, Daoism, and Chinese folk religion.

In Weixin Shengjiao's genealogy, the teachings of the Eight Trigrams passed from Fuxi Shi to the incarnated goddess Jiutian Xuannu (九天玄女), within the framework of the second Daoist state of manifestation, or *Taiji* (太極). Subsequently, the teachings about the Trigrams were passed to the three Chinese ancestors. Grand Master Hun Yuan teaches that “Inheriting from Fuxi civilization, Huangdi and Yandi developed Lian Shan Gui Zang, and Chiyao created the Nine Squares and Eight Trigrams of Later Heaven” (Hun Yuan 2016, 36).

Fuxi Shi, the mythical first emperor of China, is also considered the father of the Hsien Tien (Former World) arrangement of trigrams. After that, three editions of the *I Ching* (易經; Book of Changes), known respectively as *Lian Shan Yi*, *Gui Cang Yi*, and *Zhou Yi* were established. Some scholars believe that the *Lian Shan Yi* (連山易, The Changing Principle of Continuous Mountains) was written to record the 64 hexagrams (六十四卦), according to traditional chronology at the time of Emperor Yu (禹, 2194–2149 BCE). It starts with the hexagram Gen (艮), which means “mountain.” Supposedly, the *Gui Cang Yi* (歸藏易, The Changing Principle of Return and Storage), as a new version of the *I Ching*, was written at the time of the Shang dynasty (1600–1046 BCE), with the hexagram Kun (坤), which symbolizes Earth, as its starting point. Archeology has proved that, before the formation of the third version, the *Zhou Yi* (周易), which was written at the time of the Zhou dynasty (1046–256 BCE), several hexagrams made of series of numbers were already widely used, and dated back to the period of the Shang dynasty. In Weixin Shengjiao, Guiguzi is said to be the sage who uphold these teachings, and finally passed his knowledge to Master Hun Yuan through revelation.

In this regard, Weixin Shengjiao claims that the transmission process of the heavenly teachings offers the holy ground for establishing the correct ancestral heritage, resolving the grievances of ancestors, and as a consequence, making the world harmonious.

*A Comparison between Daesoon Jinrihoe's “Resolution of Grievances for Mutual Beneficence” and Weixin Shengjiao's “Resolving Grievances to Make Life Harmonious”*

A. Similarities in the Religious Ideas of Daesoon Jinrihoe and Weixin Shengjiao

We have examined so far, the main contents and connotations of “resolving grievances” in the two religious doctrines. As we have seen, Daesoon Jinrihoe and Weixin Shengjiao have several points in common. Both cherish the spiritual heritage of the great sages and ancestors, while emphasizing the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence or harmonious life. Grand Master Hun Yuan's concept of *Weixin* (唯心, mind) also presents similarities with Daesoon Thought.

Kang Jeung-san stated: “I only see the mind (of people)” (*Kyobeop* 2,10). In many occasions, he emphasized the importance of “mind itself” (心), “one-mind” (一心), or the “soul in the mind” (心靈). Jo Jeong-san, regarded by Daesoon Jinrihoe as Kang’s successor in the religious orthodoxy, issued a “Declaration of Propagation of the Dao” (布諭文), proposing a way to seek the “soul in the mind,” while maintaining a strict union with the Supreme God (Sangje) incarnated in Kang Jeung-san.

In Daesoon Thought, the sacred religious realm is accessed by restoring and preserving the “soul (spirit) in the mind” as the heavenly endowed nature of humans. It is also called “the innate pure mind as the sacred place of spirits” (心靈神臺). The quest is reflected in the architectures and structure of the Yeongdae, sacred spaces within temple complexes built under the instructions of Park Wudang (1917–1995 according to the lunar calendar normally used in the movement, or 1918–1996 according to the solar calendar), regarded by Daesoon Jinrihoe as Jo Jeong-san’s successor. The hierophany making the “innate pure mind as the sacred place of spirits” shares several affinities with the concept of Weixin (唯心), which gives its name to Weixin Shengjiao, “the Sacred Teachings of Mind Only” (唯心聖教會).

It should perhaps be added that the English translation of 唯心聖教會 is not without problems. Weixin Shengjiao teaches that “the mind is the Buddha,” “the mind is the only method,” or “the mind, the origin of *I Ching*, is the only way to achieve Nirvana” (Hun Yuan 2016, 42). Thereby, “Weixin’s method is that mind is everything” (Hun Yuan 2016, 24). However, “the notion of ‘mind,’ on the other hand, is not constructed according to Western or rationalist models, and includes what is commonly called the heart” (Introvigne 2016).

We find other similarities between the two movements in the idea of Buddha-nature, *Tathāgata-garbha*, *Tathatā*, or the true self, as described in various sections of medieval Chinese Mahayana Buddhism, which emphasized scriptures like the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*, the *Awakening of Faith*, the *Nirvāṇa sūtra*, and “On the Attainment of Buddhahood” (*Shenming-chengfoyi*, 神明成佛義) by Emperor Wu of the Liang dynasty (Liangwudi, 梁武帝: see Ito 1986, 217–249), as well as the Linji school (臨濟宗) of the Zen (Chan) tradition.

The culture of venerating scriptures in Weixin Shengjiao reminds us of the tradition of cherishing the scriptures and stupas enshrining sacred relics in the

Mahāsāṃghika school of Buddhism, or Emperor Wu's high respect for holy texts. According to Fiona Chang (2016):

After the Weixin's Dao Zang [the collection of Grand Master Hun Yuan's teachings] was completed with 15,615 books, 'petitions will be presented to Heaven (稟天)' in ten 'open-book rituals' over a period of six months. In other words, these books are presented to Heaven and become sacred through the ceremonies. The ritual of transmitting Weixin's Dao Zang (傳藏大典) is then held for members to personally participate in the preservation process, using their own hands to place the 15,615 books into the sacred spaces of 10 preaching halls around Taiwan, 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 Weixin's Dao Zang established its sacredness. (Chang 2016, 7)

In Grand Master Hun Yuan's teaching on "resolving grievances," there is also a strong emphasis on the heritage of ancestors, which is quite similar to that of Daesoon Jinrihoe, although how this is presented is also somewhat different:

If the spirits of the ancestors are not at peace, then the minds of men will not be at peace and all under heaven will inevitably be in great disorder. Grievance after grievance, when will they cease? One generation takes vengeance on another generation, and one age takes vengeance on another age. It is in this way that the Chinese nationality has had 3,762 wars, big and small. (Lee 2013, 27)

This can be compared with the following passages from the *Jeongyeong* of Daesoon Jinrihoe:

Fighting among people triggers a feud among ancestors, and after the fight is over in heaven, the corresponding fight in the human world is decided. (*Kyobeop* 1:54)

The reason why the Three Realms have not been newly created is due to the fact that, in the Former World, the principle of mutual conflict dominated human affairs, making the three Realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity unable to interact with one another, while producing miserable disasters. (*Yesi* 8)

Hence, descending to the human world, Sangje reordered [everything] in accordance with his cosmic plan for Heaven and Earth. After setting them in an unshakable way, by resolving the grudges that had piled up over the ages through his harmonious reordering and the opening of the Later World, with the establishment of the Dao of mutual beneficence, he harmoniously reorganized human affairs, so that all people revered him as God. (*Yesi* 9)

According to Daesoon Jinrihoe, the main principle of Sangje's Reordering of the Universe lied in reshaping the cosmic plan for Heaven and Earth in its public and collective sphere, while resolving the grievances of deities through the Heavenly Way of Mutual Beneficence (解冤相生), so that the resolution of each



individual grievance could naturally be achieved. And through his promulgation of the advent of the new world, which included the essentials of the Three Teachings, Kang prepared a way where everyone could participate in the Earthly Paradise.

Weixin Shengjiao presents a similar view of creating universal harmony through resolving the grievances (解冤和生) of ancestors at the collective level, as well as untying knots of enmity (解冤釋結) and the quarrels within aggrieved households at the individual level. The movement uses the categories of the Visible and Hidden, drawn from the Buddhist and Daoist scriptures, in its interpretation of the sacred texts (Lee 2013, 29–36).

In addition, as Fiona Chang (2016, 16–17) has persuasively argued, both systems of thoughts are based on the tradition of the Three Teachings (Buddhism, Daoism, and Confucianism) and the philosophical thought of the “Way of Change” as taught in the book *I Ching*. The central principle of Weixin Shengjiao is to practice the Eight Saints’ Paths (八聖道) and reach a state of unity between humanity and nature, by studying natural phenomena as interpreted through the *I Ching* and its trigrams. The central tenets of Daesoon Truth include “the Virtuous Concordance of Yin and Yang” and “the Harmonious Union between Divine Beings and Human beings,” while heading towards “Perfected Unification with Dao” (道通真境), in connection with the principle of *Zheng Yi* (“The Way of Ultimate Change,” 正易), which is a transformed version of the “Way of Change.”

In Daesoon Jinrihoe’s sacred book, the *Jeongyeong*, Sangje gives a speech regarding world affairs to his core disciples, using concepts that appear in the tradition of the “Way of Change”:

Lyu Chanmyeong [1866–1931] has received Sangje’s instruction that ‘the Perfect Enlightenment with Dao’ shall hinge on Geon (乾, Qian), Gam (坎, Kan), Gan (艮, Gen), Jin (震, Zhen), Sŏn (巽, Xun), Yi (離, Li), Gon (坤, Kun), Tae (兌, Dui). Receiving Sangje’s instruction, he read Geon (乾, Qian), Gam (坎, Kan), Gan (艮, Gen), Jin (震, Zhen), Sŏn (巽, Xun), Yi (離, Li), Gon (坤, Kun), Tae (兌, Dui) aloud, then left Sangje’s presence. (*Kyowun* 1:47)

When disciples such as Choi Dukgyeom [?–1951], and Cha Gyungsuk [1880–1936] were with Sangje, Choi Dukgyeom asked the following question to Sangje: “How could world affairs be developed?” To this, Sangje answered: “It will be done like this,” and wrote the characters Ja (子, Zi), Chuk (丑, Chou), Yin (寅, Yin), Myo (卯, Mao), Jin (辰, Chen), Sa (巳, Si), Ō (午, Wu), Mi (未, Wei), Xin (申, Shen), Yu (酉, You), Xul (戌, Xu), Hae (亥, Hai).

Kim Jahyun (1874–1927) jibed at interpreting it. Thereupon, after writing the characters Gap (甲, Jia), Eul (乙, Yi), Byung (丙, Bing), Jung (丁, Ding), Mu (戊, Wu), Gi (己, Ji), Gyung (庚, Geng), Xin (辛, Xin), Yim (壬, Ren), Gye (癸, Gui) while pointing toward Cha Gyungsuk, Sangje explained to the disciples that “these two lines are like a loom for weaving hemp cloth and a comb used for brushing one’s hair.” (*Kyowun* 1:48)

Admittedly, not many would understand the hidden meaning behind such a multifaceted outline of the divine cosmic plan for Heaven and Earth (度數), possibly symbolizing their reordering by Sangje. What is clear, however, is that Kang was using here several principles from the *I Ching* and *Zheng Yi*, which became crucial tools in his Reordering of the Universe under the name of “Divine Dao.” In fact, the Divine Dao constituted the cornerstone of his Reordering Works.

In general, this notion is similar to the central concept of Weixin Shengjiao, which attempts to take a middle or neutral way between Yin and Yang in order to practice humanitarianism by means of the Divine Way (Hun Yuan 2016, 26). In Daesoon theology, however, the expression “Divine Dao,” or “Way of Great Deities” (神道), indicates the Heavenly Dao as run by the Great Deities of Heaven and Earth. In Weixin teachings, it mainly denotes the spiritual way revealed by Wang Chan Lao Zu (Guiguzi) to Grand Master Hun Yuan, and sometimes incorporates the way of the great ancestors and spirits in the spiritual world. This confirms that, together with similarities, there are also quite a few differences worth examining between the two systems.

## B. Some Differences in Social Ethics

The religious ideals of both religions are also translated into social activities, but in a different way. Daesoon Jinrihoe promotes several major endeavors in the fields of charity and aid, social welfare, and education. Weixin Shengjiao focuses more on social activities that promote public welfare by providing useful information on *I Ching* and Feng Shui. Indeed, research has demonstrated a positive correlation between education in *I Ching* and Feng Shui and tangible benefits, such as increases in happiness and quality of life (Chen, Li and Lin 2015a; Chen, Li and Lin 2015b; Chen, Li, Lin and Lin 2015). Weixin Shengjiao also promotes the public chanting of mantras, to avert public calamities or alleviate their effects. For instance, during the 921 earthquake in Taiwan (1999),

the movement established the *I Ching* and Feng Shui Interest Circle and mobilized its general service group, both of which helped in the recovery (Introvigne 2016; Huang 2016, 40).

Daesoon Jinrihoe places an emphasis on “cultivation” and on a spiritual program called *Gongbu*, a specifically timed devotional incantation ritual held at the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex every day, believed to be a form of participation in the reformulation of time and space for the Later World. During the ritual, thirty-six devotees take turns chanting their mantras in special *Gongbu* rooms. Weixin Shengjiao promotes various activities and the chanting of mantras to prevent earthquakes and diseases, while praying for a spiritual renewal that would protect the whole of humanity.

What sets Weixin Shengjiao apart most from the majority of East Asian new religions is that it does not propose the concept of an ultimate deity, such as God, Maitreya or Sangje, as the ground for “resolving grievances.” Instead, it venerates the Bodhisattva Wang Chan Lao Zu as the deified equivalent of the ancient saint Guiguzi, who, as revealed by Grand Master Hun Yuan, endeavored to resolve the grievances of Chiyu and initiate his rehabilitation.

The Korean *Hongik Yingan* (弘益人間) is a doctrine of God descending from Heaven, and of the construction of the City of God or the Later World on Earth in accordance with ultimate criteria. Weixin Shengjiao’s approach is more “down-to-earth” in its character. Grand Master Hun Yuan is the patriarchal head of the religion and reveals the teachings of Bodhisattva Wang Chan Lao Zu. This may indeed be one of the points of attraction for the lay followers, who are able to communicate with the patriarchal head in an easier way than in other new religions.

Practical and utilitarian features can also be detected in Weixin Shengjiao’s emphasis on the divination side of *I Ching* and not only on its philosophical content. According to Hsieh, Weixin Shengjiao and folk religion share a similar cosmology. The movement is able to attract followers of folk religion and grow rapidly, thanks to the fact that it is much more organized and systematic than “diffuse” popular religion (Hsieh 2015, 28).

As for the respective theories of “resolving grievances,” the main difference between Daesoon Jinrihoe and Weixin Shengjiao concerns the basis of the respective concepts: reciprocal, as opposed to unidirectional logic. In Daesoon

Thought, the relationship between “resolution of grievances” and “mutual beneficence” is reciprocal and complementary, although the former functions as the presupposition for achieving the latter. Yet, in Weixin Shengjiao, it is more certain that the concept of “resolving grievances is the cause, and making life harmonious is the result” (Lee 2013, 24) operates within a scheme of unidirectional logic.

The “resolution of grievances,” strictly speaking, can be a one-directional or uni-directional concept, presupposing sacrifice either of others or oneself, through benevolence, love, or mercy. However, the resolution of grievances turns into a reciprocal concept when it is connected to mutual beneficence. In this case, it works as a buffer zone, not flowing towards a selfish, self-satisfying, or negative direction. The ethical features of mutual giving (“one has to perform certain speech and action when it is beneficial both to oneself and others”: Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2014, 19–21) suggest a form of teleological-consequentialist ethics.

### C. Differences in the Approach to the Three Teachings

The most important differences between the two movements concern their respective approach to the Three Teachings, and the role of Buddhism and Daoism. The Divine Way of Weixin Shengjiao incorporates the Three Teachings and the thoughts of the Hundred Schools, proposing their creative *ronghe* (fusion, 熔合). In Daesoon Jinrihoe, the essentials of the Three Teachings are also said to be integrated into the Dao. There is, however, a different nuance in the contents of Daesoon scripture, taught by Kang Jeungsan within the context of his Reordering Works of the Universe:

The essence of Buddhism is form, the essence of Daoism is creation, and the essence of Confucianism is propriety (佛之形體, 仙之造化, 儒之凡節). (*Gongsa* 3:39)

Being in command of the ‘Deities who are perfectly enlightened with Dao’ (道通), and the ‘Deities of Civilization’ (文明神), Sangje unified the essence of the manifold cultures and rigorously arranged the cosmic plan for Heaven and Earth (度數). (*Yesi* 12)

Several new religions of Korea synthesize and harmonize the three religious traditions following the ancient ideas of *Hongik-yingan* (弘益人間), or the presentation by Confucian intellectual Choi Chiwon (857–?) of “the mysterious

Dao (玄妙之道) incorporating the three teachings” (Yilyeon 1993, 34–37; Kim 1988, 77–82; Jo 1984, 65–82).

Weixin Shengjiao seems to show more inclination toward the Zen (Chan) or the Pure Land traditions of Buddhism, centered around prayers to Amitabha Buddha rather than around belief in a Supreme Entity or God. The mantras in both Weixin Shengjiao and Daesoon Jinrihoe incorporate the common elements of Daoism, Buddhism, and folk religion. The incantations in Daesoon Jinrihoe, however, include more elements derived from the Korean version of Daoism, while Weixin Shengjiao’s mantras are rooted in Buddhism. According to Fiona Chang:

Buddhist sutras recited by Weixinshengjiao, e.g. *Amitabha Sutra*, *Medicine Buddha Sutra*, *Sutra of the Fundamental Vows of the Bodhisattva Ksitigarbha*, *Lotus Sutra*, and *Diamond Sutra*, are all commonly recited sutra in Chinese societies. These sutras being adopted by Weixinshengjiao show how the religion included Buddhist teachings from folk beliefs. Reciting Buddhist sutra is the daily homework of believers and a part of religious assemblies. Those who recite sutra can gain merit, change their fate, and return merit to their ancestors and all living things, benefiting both the departed and the living. (Chang 2016, 6)

Weixin Shengjiao also uses Daoist sutras, but “aside from *Wang Chan Lao Chu Mantra Sutra*, these folk sutras are rarely recited and applied in Weixin Shengjiao, and are used for religious missions for certain stages, not constantly recited as Buddhist sutras” (Chang 2016, 6).

Different features can also be found in how mantras are chanted in the two religions. Weixin Shengjiao maintains its Buddhist features through performing repetitive recitation of the Buddha’s name, especially of the Amitabha Buddha in the Pure Land sects:

The merit of praising the Buddha’s name is viewed in the same way as making prostrations in veneration of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas, both of which are regarded as the only proper courses to ‘resolve grievances and transform the *kalpas* of accumulated karma’ (解冤化劫). (Lee 2013, 32)

In general, Daesoon Jinrihoe seems to show more Daoist tendencies, as we can see from the names of deities used in their incantations, including the main one called the *Taeul Mantra* (太乙呪). The principles of causes and effects, or karma, also constitute one of the bases of Daesoon Jinrihoe’s discourse, and the Buddha is enshrined alongside Gucheon Sangje (the God of the Ninth Heaven, 九天上帝,

identified with Kang Jeungsan) and the Jade Emperor (玉皇上帝, identified with Jo Jeongsan) in the major shrine of the movement called Yeongdae (靈臺). However, there are comparatively more Confucian and Daoist elements in Daesoon Jinrihoe's creeds, teachings, and ritual practices.

In Weixin Shengjiao, there is a multitude of Daoist elements both in its references to various deities and in the content of its incantations and scriptures. However, Buddhist inclinations seem to be more conspicuous. A case in point is Grand Master Hun Yuan's explanation of the doctrine of "creditor of enemies and intimates" (*yuanjia zhaizhu*, 冤家債主). According to Lee Fong-Mao, during the Three Kingdoms period, when the Buddhist monk Zhi Qian (支謙, 2<sup>nd</sup>–3<sup>rd</sup> century) translated the *Weisheng Yuan Jing* (未生怨經, Ajatasatru Sutra), he had already used the term "past evils" (*suyuan*, 宿殃), or "grievances of the unborn" (*weisheng yuan*, 未生怨). However, to express enmity and grievances, the expression *yuanjia zhaizhu* came to be used, as it was most adapted to the Chinese mentality.

From the Eastern Han to the Cao Wei periods, this term was largely used and appeared in several translations of holy scriptures. It was generally referred to the misfortunes of human life. In the Tang dynasty, and in later Buddhist scriptures and apocrypha, *yuanjia zhaizhu* was used to designate one of ten kinds of orphaned souls, in works that prescribed rites for chanting sutras and feeding hungry ghosts, such as in the translation by Amoghavajra (705–774) of the *Yujia Jiyao Yankou Shishi Yi* (瑜伽輯要焰口施食儀) and the apocryphal text *Fo Dingxin Tuoluoni Jing* (佛頂心陀羅尼經). Both were widely circulated. Esoteric Buddhism used the expression *jeshi yuanqin zhaizhu* (解釋冤親債主), with a reference to the "creditor of enemies and intimates" in Daoist scriptures. In the Daoist texts of the Wei and Jin dynasties, known as *Upper Clarity* (Shangqing, 上清), and of the Tang and Song dynasties, *yuanjia zhaizhu* was often used to designate wronged souls, within the larger context of the Daoist theology of spirits and souls (Lee 2013, 31). Grand Master Hun Yuan's explanation of *yuanjia zhaizhu*, however, seems more rooted in the Buddhist tradition of using the term.

A second example is Grand Master Hun Yuan's emphasis on chanting mantras. According to Hsieh, Weixin Shengjiao appropriates, and critically uses, pan-Indian concepts such as karma and reincarnation (Hsieh 2016, 28). Fiona Chang emphasizes that there are also sutras (*Sūtras*) that were revealed by Weixin

Shengjiao's man deity, Wang Chan Lao Zu (i.e. the divinized Guiguzi), collected in the religion's own *Apocalypse Sutra* (天啟經典):

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 Apocalypse Sutras created by the religion. Of the classics from the Three Teachings, Buddhist classics are the more frequently recited and applied. During early periods before it became an independent religion, Weixin Shengjiao was registered as 'Buddhist' in the religion category of the Ministry of the Interior, showing that it is more inclined towards Buddhism among the Three Teachings. Buddhist concepts are common in Weixin Shengjiao and are even the basis of its philosophy and teachings; concepts of 'cause and effect,' 'incarnation,' and 'merit' are common in the 30 Weixin scriptures. Grand Master Hun Yuan mainly taught the 'Four Noble Truths,' 'Eight Noble Paths,' 'Twelve Nidānas,' and the *Heart Sutra* when propagating the religion at first, and it was an opportunity to form his religious thoughts. (Chang 2016, 6)

The respect for *Heart Sutra* reminds us of the strong tradition of revering "The Heart of the Perfection of Wisdom sutra" (*Prajñāpāramitā-hṛdayam Sūtra*) in Chinese as well as in Tibetan Buddhism, although the contents differ. The same appellation of Hun Yuan as Grand Master (Chanshi, 禪師) is reminiscent of Buddhist schools as well.

About the merit of chanting mantras, Grand Master Hun Yuan offers the following explanation:

The merits of our chanting the Buddha's name can also be given to the many fields of principle. Over the past 5,000 years, our Chinese people have experienced 3,762 wars and battles, all the innocent lives killed and our 15,615 families' name and the 816 world battles and the innocent lives killed will depend on the Buddha's powers to head towards heaven, or the pure land of Western Paradise. This is a common wish and also heaven's will. (Hun Yuan 2016, 169)

The emphasis on the "pure land of Western Paradise" comes from Pure Land Buddhism. Also an important usage of Tibetan Buddhist terminology can be found in connection with esoteric Buddhism, which inspires the movement's insistence on the incessant rolling of the Dharma Wheel (*dharmachakra*, 法輪) while contributing to world peace. Grand Master Hun Yuan's instructions clearly include these references:

In the thirtieth-year of the Dharma Wheel of Peace under Heaven, the Venerable Celestial Dharma Ancestor, for the sake of the state cultivates the Way, for the sake of the people prays for blessing, and holds the third Nine-nine Religious Assembly [i.e. an assembly for a great exposition of the Scriptures, organized every ten years.] (Lee 2013, 25; see Hun Yuan 2013, 3)

This is our Nine-nine Religious Assembly, given to all of us by Venerable Patriarch Wang Chan. Together we can ensure now to resolve grievances and untie knots. But, if we want to resolve grievances and untie knots, we must chant scripture ourselves, in accordance with what was taught by Venerable Patriarch Wang Chan: ‘Read eight sections of scripture ten times each’ (誦八部經, 各十遍). (Lee 2013, 26; see Hun Yuan 2013, 54)

Grand Master Hun Yuan’s usage of the *dharmachakra* is connected to his idea of world peace and resolving grievances. According to his teachings, “the dharma ship loads doctrine. The dharmachakra is incessantly rolling. Weixin’s 48 great wishes have benefited the country and people” (Hun Yuan 2016, 7). Likewise, here we can find some affinities with the Tibetan Buddhist’s use of the notion of *dharmachakra*. Both demarcate different stages or periods, based on their interpretations of scriptures and on their respective theories of emptiness and mercy. Grand Master Hun Yuan’s ideas also share some affinity with the classic *dharmachakra* (法輪) theories of Zhu Daosheng (竺道生: ?–434). Jizang (吉藏: 549–623), Paramārtha (真諦: 499–569), and others. The original meaning of *dharmachakra* is “to cleanse the anguish of the sentient beings through Buddha’s teaching.”

Yet, here Grand Master Hun Yuan’s use of the expression “resolving grievances and loosening knots,” as Lee Fong-Mao states, “emphasizes the merit and virtue of the veneration and recitation of the True Scriptures, while placing the retribution for people’s grievances in the category of karma, the cause and effect of the accumulation of kalpas from the antiquity to the future” (Lee 2013, 26).

According to Lee Fong-Mao:

When Weixin Shengjiao uses the Buddhist method of providing deliverance for the souls, the names of the providers of aid appear on the Pure Land Altar, set side by side on spirit tablets of different colors. In the ceremony for the placing of food in the mouths of hungry ghosts, they call out all their names and places of residence one by one, so that each lonely soul can be helped. And this generally corresponds to the salvation ritual for private individuals and households. (Lee 2013, 39)

By contrast, in the Devotional Offerings (*Chiseong*) of Daesoon Jinrihoe, which are mostly held in Yeosu Headquarters temple complex every month, the object of worship is not an individual spirit who has a grudge or grievance, nor are the names of the ghosts or the spirits called out. Rather, the *Chiseong* is a ritual ceremony showing sincere gratitude for the grace of Sangje and other Great Deities, including the main ancestors. However, in the Devotional Offering for an



initiation, the name of the new initiate is called out. *Nok-myeong Ji* (a paper which symbolizes the improvement of initiate's lifespan and blessing in this life) is then burned by the initiate as a representative of his or her household.

According to the doctrine of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the "Reordering Works of the Resolution of Grievances," for both ancestors and living individual human beings, has already been performed as a result of Sangje's Reordering of the Universe, along with other forms of Reordering of the "Resolution of Grievances" at the collective level. Daesoon Thought indicates that, when a new devotee joins Daesoon Jinrohe to follow the law of Dao, his or her grievances can naturally be resolved through personal cultivation. Thus, a separate special ritual for resolving the grievances of each individual is not necessary. The characteristics of Devotional Offerings in Daesoon Jinrihoe are more akin to Confucian ritual in appearance, while the content of the incantations is more Daoist than Buddhist.

In Weixin Shengjiao, Grand Master Hun Yuan involves various subjects in the process of resolving grievances through salvation rituals (超度法儀). They include spirits in the three realms, family and ancestral spirits, national grievances, orphaned souls, and even the "aggrieved spirits of insects killed by pesticides" (Lee 2013, 29). By incorporating in its teachings doctrines about "resolving grievances to release the knots," which are frequently used in Buddhism, Grand Master Hun Yuan uses the Buddhist text called *Cibei Xiu-Chanfa* (慈悲修懺法, original name 慈悲三昧修懺), in which the fifth of seven kinds of repentance corresponds to a "heart of equanimity extended to both friends and foes (冤親平等心)" (Lee 2013, 32).

The *Cibei-Xiu Chanfa* is similar to the *Cibei Daochang Chanfa* (慈悲道場懺法: "The Repentance Rite for the Altar of Compassion") and the *Liang Huang Bao Chan* (梁皇寶懺: "The Repentance of the Liang Emperor") attributed to Emperor Liang Wudi (梁武帝, 502–549). It can also be connected to the *Cibei Sanmei Shui Chanfa* (慈悲水懺法: "The Repentance of the Waters of Samadhi of Compassion"), which was propagated by the late Tang monk, Zhixuan (知玄, 811–833) (Bai 2009, 69–129; Lagerwey and Marsone 2015, 409–410). In fact, when Grand Master Hun Yuan uses the concept of "creditor of enemies and intimates," he also mentions that "reciting the water repentance" (*shui chan*: 水懺) would liberate all sentient beings.

By contrast, in Daesoon Jinrihoe, the only way of resolving grievances is through Sangje in the Ninth Heaven. Yet, the resolution of grievances can only be fully completed by reaching the stage of Perfected Unification with Dao, through self-cultivation based on the principle of “guarding against self-deception” (無自欺).

These differences in the use of the Three Teachings, and interpretation of the concept of “resolving grievances,” should of course be assessed against the similarities between Daesoon Jinrihoe and Weixin Shengjiao, both in their use of religious traditions and grand designs for the future.

### *Conclusion: Resolution of Grievances and Cultivation of Mind*

The previous sections have catalogued the major similarities and differences between Daesoon Jinrihoe and Weixin Shengjiao’s doctrines or systems of thought, centering on the concept of “resolving grievances.” It has been noted that both movements share the tradition of Three Teachings. However, in Weixin Shengjiao, Buddhism and Daoism are amalgamated in a manner wherein Buddhism becomes the more dominant component, both for the resolution of grievances and for the removal and settling of misgivings or worries. In comparison, Daesoon thought seems to share more features with Daoism and Confucianism. Further, we have seen that there are differences in the object, subject, and method of resolving grievances, as well as similarities in the respective ideas of self-cultivation.

With regards to these similarities, just as Daesoon Jinrihoe places a high value on “guarding against self-deception,” Weixin Shengjiao emphasizes the state of mind of “not being ashamed” or “achieving resolution,” and stresses the importance of repentance for achieving salvation. Other key similarities can be found in the two movements’ views of mind in relation to self-cultivation. Here are some examples of Daesoon ideas, from Park Wudang’s instructions and from the *Jeongyeong*:

Since it is said that ‘Every great and small affair is examined by the deities of Heaven and Earth,’ those engaged in cultivation should bear this in mind, in order not to deceive one’s mind even in a dark room. (Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department 2016, 28)

To guard against a mistake, it has been said as follows: ‘Deceiving oneself is to desert oneself, and deceiving one’s mind is to deceive deities, and deceiving deities is to deceive

Heaven.’ Thus, we ought to think deeply about what is permissible. (Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department 2016, 42)

Mind is the center of the universe. Therefore, the body of north, south, east and west relies on mind. (*Kyowun* 1:66)

In turn, concerning the importance of mind, Grand Master Hun Yuan offers the following instructions:

Everyone’s mind is a universe. The mind is the truth. The authentic self stores great wisdom. By means of disclosing this treasure, we can have a peaceful mind and live a happy life. Only Zen Enlightenment can bring peaceful mind and happiness. (Hun Yuan 2016, 69)

Weixin Shengjiao is a religion of peaceful mind. To be a saint, sage and Buddha, you have to do those [sic] you won’t feel ashamed and have to prove the truth. (Hun Yuan 2016, 70)

This is also the main doctrine of Daesoon Truth. It is the way of attaining the “Perfected Unification with Dao” (道通真境) through self-cultivation based on “guarding against self-deception,” as well as the propagation of Sangje’s truth and his Great Itineration (*Daesoon*).

According to Daesoon Thought, “the human mind is an organ, in which divine beings reside, and which divine beings use to make things happen” (*Haengrok* 3:44). Hence, human beings come to Earth to achieve harmony with divine beings through their minds. Further, when human beings keep their mind clean and selfless, while guarding against self-deception and living in union with divine beings for the betterment of others, they can reach the stage where they understand and fulfill every secret and rule of the universe:

When we practice the principle of not deceiving ourselves as the ground of cultivation, and revere ethics and morals, we can naturally understand and unravel the whole movement of nature. (Park 1993, 316–317)

We should bear in mind the fact that, through reconciling and uniting with each other, and becoming one in mind and body, we can achieve the Perfected Enlightenment with Dao and gain the blessings of great fortune. (Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department 1989, 2)

This approach of collaborative effort between human beings, as well as between humans and deities, is also expressed by Grand Master Hun Yuan:

Self-cultivation indicates that one can examine one’s behavior and thinking in order to check if there is any deviation. It is necessary to reflect, repent, and make efforts to understand the truth and practice it in one’s daily life. To make the mind peaceful is to obtain happiness. (Hun Yuan 2016, 69)

When Buddhas and gods are helping people, they don't tie up their hearts, instead make life full of vitality. They lead us overriding our troubles and cross the 'river of life and death' (river of troubles of life and death). Therefore says: 'to pass.' True passing is passing freely another [sic], '*pass oneself and pass another*' as the principle, and principle is living. (Hun Yuan 2016, 167)

Similarly, in Daesoon Thought, with the same joint effort, human beings can share the eternal blessings of life with deities as they face the period of *Injon* (Venerable Humanity, 人尊), which is characterized by the two principles of the "resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of all life" and the "repaying of favors for the mutual beneficence of all life":

'The resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence means to make others prosperous and free from grudges.' This leads to the true stage of 'the Perfected Unification with Dao,' based on 'guarding against self-deception,' a practice which 'focuses on cultivating mind to be pure like a mirror.' (Park 1985, 114)

The religious order should aim at building an image of a true devotee that can be respected as a spiritual model, by practicing the basic works for achieving faithfully the salvation of the world and the redemption of humanity, and for devoting oneself to the reformation of the human spirit and the renewal of human beings, based on guarding against self-deception (...), while raising the will to resolve grievances for mutual beneficence and repay favors for mutual beneficence. (Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department 1984, 2)

Daesoon ethics tries to build a complete image of a caring human being, embodied with heavenly virtue, who has harmonized the pursuit of the ideal objectives and their tangible realization through practice. The aim for the individual lies in the unification of soul and body, and of divinity and humanity. This harmonization between humans and deities is well expressed in the four tenets of Daesoon Jinrihoe and the idea of *Injon*. Similar aspirations have been expressed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century in the West by philosophies focusing on the subjectivity of human being, including existentialism, phenomenology, critical theory, and post-structuralism.

Based on a comparable idea of self-perfection, Weixin Shengjiao also advocates the practice of religion for the salvation of the nations, in particular by praying for the country and for world peace:

Our method proposes a practice under the 'I' [i.e. *I Ching*] as the correct principle, for the nation and for all mankind. There are two aspects, the tangible and the intangible, in practicing for the nation. The intangible goes together with the tangible, and then the

tangible is rendered intangible. With a singularly focused mind, we pray for world peace. (Hun Yuan 2016, 65)

In Weixin Shengjiao, the act of resolving grievances is grounded in repentance, and as such contributes to the creation of a harmonious life. In Daesoon Jinrihoe, the “Reordering Work of the Resolution of Grievances” leads to mutual beneficence for all living beings, while promoting the harmonious union between divine beings and human beings. Moreover, true to the name it has chosen for itself, Weixin Shengjiao (唯心聖教), shows that the “mind-only,” “soul in the mind,” or the “authentic self,” is the ground for creating harmonious lives and peace through resolving grievances.

In Daesoon Jinrihoe, devoting oneself to serving Sangje through the moral principle of mutual beneficence guides people to respect others as well as themselves as high and noble. Every human being has received an “innate human nature” as an endowment from Heaven as son or daughter of Sangje. This principle creates a spirit of coexistence and mutual prosperity in human relations, in the form of serving others with respect by practicing the three cardinal virtues of sincerity, reverence, and faithfulness (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2014, 9 and 16–17; Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department 2003, 6).

## References

Note: Quotes from the *Jeongyeong*, Daesoon Jinrihoe’s sacred scripture, are given in the text by book, chapter, and verse (e.g. “*Gongsa* 3:39.”) I have used the 2004 Korean edition, Yeosu: Daesoonjinrihoe Publishing Department.

Bai, Jinxian. 2009. 慈悲水懺法研究 (A Research on Water Repentance Service). Taipei: Wen Shi Zhe Chu Ban She.

Chang, Hsin-Fang Fiona. 2016. “Nationalities and the World, the Three Teachings (三教), and the Way of Change (易道) – Religious Connotations of Taiwan’s Weixinshengjiao (唯心聖教) and South Korea’s Daesoonjinrihoe (大巡真理會).” Paper presented at the CESNUR 2016 International Conference, Daejin University, Pocheon City, Korea, July 5–10. Accessed August 19, 2017. [http://www.cesnur.org/2016/daejin\\_chang.pdf](http://www.cesnur.org/2016/daejin_chang.pdf).

- Chen, Li-Yuen, Li Chen-Mei and Lin Po-Chang. 2015a. "Motivation for Learning I-Ching among Adult Lifelong Learning in I-Ching University." Paper presented at the Asian Conference of Education of The International Academy Forum, Kobe, Japan, October 21–25.
- Chen, Li-Yuen, Li Chen-Mei and Lin Po-Chang. 2015b. "The Relationship between the motivation for I-Ching Learning, Life and Family Satisfaction in a Lifelong Learning Program of I Ching University." Paper presented at the Asian Conference of Education of The International Academy Forum, Kobe, Japan, October 21–25.
- Chen, Li-Yuen, Li Chen-Mei, Lin Sung and Lin Po-Chang. 2015. "The Effect of I-Ching Education on the Temperament of Elementary School Children, Lifelong Learning Capability, and Bullying Behavior." Paper presented at the Asian Conference of Education of The International Academy Forum, Kobe, Japan, October 21–25.
- Dai, Yi and Gong Shuduo. 2003. *中國通史* (The General History of China). Sterling: Intelligence Press.
- Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture. 2014. *大巡真理會要覽* (An Introduction to Daesoon Jinrihoe). Yeosu: Daesoonjinrihoe Publishing Department.
- Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department. 1984. *대순회보 2* (Daesoon Bulletin 2). Seoul: Daesoonjinrihoe Publishing Department.
- Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department. 1989. *대순회보 12* (Daesoon Bulletin 12). Seoul: Daesoonjinrihoe Publishing Department.
- Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department. 2003. *포덕교화기본원리 2* (Basic Principles for Propagation and Edification 2). Yeosu: Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department.
- Daesoon Jinrihoe Religious Research and Edification Department. 2016. *대순지침* (Instructions of Daesoonjinrihoe). Yeosu: Daesoonjinrihoe Publishing Department.
- Hsieh, Shu-Wei. 2015. "Master, Scriptures and Ritual: A Study on Taiwanese Sacred Teachings of Mind-Only (Weixin Shengjiao 唯心聖教)." Paper presented at the 2016 International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) World Congress, University of Erfurt, Germany, August 23–29.
- Huang, Chun-Zhi. 2016. *Promoter of World Peace Grand Master Huen-Yuan: How Propagating Chinese Culture Contributes to World Peace*. Taichung City (Taiwan): Wei Xin Zong Cultural Communication Co. Ltd.

- Hun Yuan (Grand Master) (Hunyuan Chansi). 2013. 王禪老祖玄妙真經 (Wan Chan Laozu Profound Sutra—Annotation). Taichung: Wei Xin Zong Cultural Communication Co. Ltd.
- Hun Yuan (Grand Master). 2016. *The New Religion of the World Taiwan Weixin Shengjiao*. Guoxing (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Hsien-Fo Temple of Chan-Chi Mountain; New Taipei City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao Charity Foundation; and Nantou City (Taiwan): Weixin Shengjiao College.
- Introvigne, Massimo. 2016. “Weixin Shengjiao.” *World Religions and Spirituality Project*, November 10. Accessed August 17, 2017. <https://wrlrels.org/2016/11/12/weixin-shengjiao/>.
- Ito, Takatoshi. 1986. “梁武帝 神明成仏義の考察” (A Study on the *Shen-Ming-Cheng-Fo-Yi* by Emperor Wu of the Liang Dynasty). 駒澤大學佛教學部研究紀要 第四十四號 (The Core Research in the Department of Buddhist Studies in Komazawa University) 14:217–249.
- Jo, Byungsoon, ed. 1984. 增修補註 三國史記 (The Records of the Three Korean Kingdoms—Enlarged with Supplemental Notes). Seoul: Seongam Antique Book Museum Publication.
- Kim, Busik. 1988. 三國史記. 「新羅本紀」 卷 4 (Historical Records of the Three Korean Kingdoms. 4: Main Records of Silla), translated by Kim Jongkwon. Seoul: Myungmun-dang.
- Lagerwey, John, and Pierre Marsone, eds. 2015. *Modern Chinese Religion I: Song-Liao-Jin-Yuan (960–1368 AD)*. 2 vol. Leiden: Brill.
- Lee, Fong-Mao. 2013. “平反與解冤：混元禪師的神道觀及其三祖仰” (Redressing and Resolving Grievances: Chan Master Hun Yuan’s Perspectives on the Divine Way and His Beliefs Regarding the Third Ancestor). *Taiwan Journal of Religious Studies* 14:21–50.
- Lin, Liren, ed. 2009. “論《史記·五帝本紀》首黃帝之意義” (“The Intention to Begin from Huang-Ti” in “Biographic Sketches of Five Emperors” from the *Shi-Jim*). 中國哲學書電子化計劃 (Chinese Text Project) 2009.3. Accessed September 4, 2017. <http://ctext.org/shiji/wu-di-ben-ji/zh>.
- Park, Wudang. 1985, 1993. 도전님훈시: 대순사상으로 새 시대를 연다 (Instructions of Dojeon: Opening the New Era with Daesoon Thought). Yeosu: Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture (private circulation).
- Sima, Qian. 2004. 史記 卷 1 (Chronicles, Vol. 1) Taipei: Taishun Publications.
- Wang, Hengwei. 2006. 中國歷史講堂 I: 遠古至春秋 (Lectures on Chinese History—1: From the Remote Era to Spring and Autumn Periods). Hong Kong: Zhonghua Publications.
- Woolf, Greg. 2007. *Ancient Civilizations: The Illustrated Guide to Belief, Mythology, and Art*. New York: Barnes & Noble.

- Yilyeon. 1993. 三國遺事 (The Heritage of the Three States). Edited by Kim Bongdu. Seoul: Gyomun Publications.
- Yuan, Ke, ed. 1979. 山海經校注 (An Annotated Edition of the Classic of Mountains and Seas). Shanghai: Guji Publisher.



## Research Notes

---

### “Cult Crimes” and Fake News: Eye-Gouging in Shanxi

Holly Folk

*Western Washington University*

Holly.Folk@wwu.edu

*In 2017, a group of Western scholars, including CESNUR’s Massimo Introvigne and Holly Folk, were invited to participate in a dialogue in China’s Henan province in June, followed by a conference in Hong Kong in September, involving Chinese law enforcement officers, leaders of China’s official “anti-xie-jiao” association, and Chinese academics. The dialogue was about the notion of xie jiao (an expression difficult to translate, and not exactly equivalent to the English “cult”) and one particular group classified in China as xie jiao, the Church of Almighty God, also known as Eastern Lightning. The dialogue led Western scholars to further investigate accusations against the Church of Almighty God. So far, the accusations investigated appear to be false.*

**ABSTRACT:** On August 24, 2013, a six-year old boy called Guo Xiaobin was kidnapped by a woman who gouged out his eyes. The investigation on the horrific crime was followed with considerable emotion by Chinese public opinion, and was concluded by the police early in September 2013. The crime had been perpetrated by the boy’s aunt, Zhang Huiyeng, who had committed suicide on August 30, 2013. There were no references to religion in the Chinese media until the homicide committed in a McDonald’s diner in Zhaoyuan on May 28, 2014 was attributed by the Chinese authorities (falsely, as it later came out) to the Church of Almighty God. In June 2014, the attack on Guo Xiaobin was presented by Chinese anti-cult sources as perpetrated by the Church of Almighty God. No evidence of any involvement of the Church of Almighty God on the crime exists, and the government seems to have created the accusation after the McDonald’s incident to further justify its persecution of the Church, exploiting a century-old Chinese anti-Christian theme of accusing Christians of gouging out eyes.

**KEYWORDS:** Church of Almighty God, Eastern Lightning, Xie Jiao, New Religious Movements in China, Eye-Gouging Themes in China, Eye-Gouging Accusations Against Christians, Guo Xiaobin.

Massimo Introvigne’s research into the McDonald’s killing in Zhaoyuan (2014: Introvigne 2017) should throw into question other allegations of atrocious crimes made by the Chinese government against controversial religious

groups. Along with the McDonald’s accusation, and frequently reported in tandem with that “rumor,” is that the Church of Almighty God was responsible for the blinding of a 6-year-old boy in the Shanxi province in 2013. As with the McDonald’s case in Zhaoyuan, an examination of reports in the press raise questions about the involvement of the Church of Almighty God, or any other group, in this horrific crime.

### *The Case of “Little Bin Bin” in Shanxi*

The maiming of a boy in Shanxi province was an international news story when it happened at the end of August 2013. I have reconstructed it based on the media reports mentioned in the bibliography. At the center of the case was an extended family in Linfen, Fenxi County: two brothers and their spouses and children. Guo Zhiping is the father of Guo Xiaobin, the boy who was blinded. His brother, Guo Zhicheng, was married to Zhang Huiyeng (1972–2013), identified by the police as the attacker. Originally, the families of Guo Zhiping and Guo Zhicheng lived in the same village, in houses that shared a yard. In 2007, to obtain a better education for his children, Guo Zhicheng rented a house in Quaojiaxhuang village, about twenty kilometers away.

The Zhang and Guo families had suffered ample hardship previously. Guo Xiaobin had been born with a cleft palate, and a neighbor told reporters his sister had drowned in a well around 2007. The elderly father of the Guo siblings had a medical condition (hemiplegia) that left him bedridden. For a while, the brothers and their sister shared in the care of the father. He lived with Guo Zhiping, but Guo Zhicheng and his wife, Zhang Huiyeng, contributed to his upkeep by paying 5,000 yuan a year for his care.

At the time of the maiming, the whole family was under considerable strain. In early 2013, Guo Zhiping injured his foot in a car accident, and became unable to work. Guo Zhiping’s wife found herself caring for her husband and paralyzed father-in-law. Soon thereafter, the other brother, Guo Zhicheng (Zhang Huiyeng’s husband) also was injured, leaving Zhang Huiyeng’s salary as the only income for both families. Zhang Huiyeng was likely under considerable stress as the sole earner. Nor was Zhang Huiyeng very much suited to her job as a chicken-gutter in a poultry-processing plant. It was widely reported that she had been psychologically damaged in childhood by the experience of being bitten by a

snake. Several reports on her mental instability noted she had a lifelong fear of blood. Despite her employment at a poultry plant, Zhang Huiyeng did not like to kill chickens.

Interviewed by *Beijing News*, Zhang Huiyeng's supervisor, "Manager Liu," explained that Zhang Huiyeng lived at the chicken farm during the week, because it was a forty-minute drive from her village of Quaojiaxhuang (*Beijing News* 2013). The chicken processing plant closed at 3 pm on August 24, which was a Saturday. The timing explained how she could commit the attack.

Guo Xiaobin was kidnapped at 6:30 pm on August 24. He was playing at home when a woman approached the yard, asking if anyone played mahjong at his house. The woman lured the boy away from his house. Allegedly, the attacker told the boy, "Don't cry, and I will not gouge out your eyes." She then did remove his eyes, with an unknown tool. Guo Xiaobin was found in a field about 11 pm that night. He may have been drugged before the attack.

Traumatized and disoriented, Guo Xiaobin seemed not to appear to understand what had happened to him, repeatedly asking his mother, "Why is it so dark?" He described the woman who abducted him as having "yellow hair," which the police suspected might have been a wig. She spoke with a foreign accent, perhaps to disguise her voice. Wang Wenli, Xiaobin's mother, said she did not know anyone who would want to hurt her son. She and Guo Zhiping ran a mahjong parlor at their home, but it appears to have been a small operation, patronized mostly by their neighbors—not a source of friction in the village.

### *Investigating the Murder*

At first, the police thought they were investigating a ring of organ traffickers, and they offered a reward of more than \$16,000 for the capture of the attacker. Bin Bin's eyes were found at the scene, however, and organ theft soon was ruled out as a motive. On August 25, Zhang Huiyeng and Guo Zhicheng brought his father back to Quaojiaxhuang, because Xiaobin's family was tied up caring for him. This likely put additional pressure on Zhang Huiyeng as a caregiver.

Soon after the attack, a reporter from *Beijing News* visited the hometown of Xiaobin, and included commentary on the "wife of Guo Zhicheng" in the article, before she was named as a suspect. The reporter saw little that was unusual, but

later learned from villagers that the day before she died, Zhang Huiyeng had been speaking very strangely, saying “I am a ghost,” and “I am God.” Villagers speculated that the strange behavior of Zhang Huiyeng was triggered by the police investigation (*Beijing News* 2013). Guo Zhicheng also said she acted abnormally after the police inquiry.

On August 29, Zhang Huiyeng’s father was brought over to see her. He reported that Zhang Huiyeng was acting strangely, very scared, and he said someone had drugged her so that she could not control her body.

On August 30, Zhang Huiyeng committed suicide by jumping in a well. At around 6:30 in the morning, as Guo Zhicheng was making bread for breakfast, Zhang Huiyeng said she was not feeling well. She left the house, ostensibly to go to the neighbor’s. The family heard her jump, and Guo Zhicheng screamed for help. A man went down the well with a hemp rope, but he could not raise her out by himself. It took the help of a second villager, and Zhang Huiyeng had been submerged for ten minutes before she was pulled out. She went into cardiac arrest as they tried to rescue her. Despite attempts at resuscitation, Zhang Huiyeng was declared dead at the scene. Zhang Huiyeng was 41 years old when she died. A small woman, she was known to be quiet and not fond of talking. She was one of five adult children. Her brother and sister, Zhang Ruihua and Zhang Huihua, reported that Zhang Huiyeng had been timid and frightened to leave home since childhood. As mentioned earlier, she had been bitten by a snake when she was ten, and afraid of the outside after that. Zhang Huiyeng also was afraid of rain. She is said to have fainted when she heard news of her niece’s death in the well.

In his disoriented state, Guo Xiaobin had given conflicting descriptions of his attacker, at least once asserting her hair was long and black, not “yellow.” But Guo Xiaobin also described his attacker as wearing a purple shirt (“the color of grapes”), and the police traced a shirt belonging to Zhang Huiyeng matching that description. It was stained with blood that DNA testing revealed to be that of the boy. The police quickly closed their investigation after the suicide of Zhang Huiyeng, without citing religion as a potential motive. The family told reporters that the Guo brothers generally got along. Nor had there been previous conflict with Zhang Huiyeng, who like the rest of the family doted on Xiaobin. Rather, the aunt was remembered for giving her nephew choice pieces of food, like the best bits of sweet potato. Xiaobin’s father told the media he did not believe his sister was capable of the crime. Guo Zhiping attested to his sister-in-law’s weak

psychological state, but says relations with his brother and sister-in-law were “harmonious,” noting that Zhang Huiyeng loved her nephew.

Guo Xiaobin was treated at Shanxi Eye Hospital. A fundraising campaign led by Shanxi Provincial Women’s Association raised more than 160,000 yuan toward his medical care. He was released in December 2013, after being surgically fitted with prosthetic eyeballs. By that time, he had started to adjust to his blindness, and was learning basic tasks. Doctors expressed hope that, as he grew older, it might be possible to compensate for his lost vision with adaptive technologies or even “bionic eyes.”

### *Accusing the Church of Almighty God*

It is worth noting that none of the reports mentioned the Church of Almighty God or any other religious group at the time of the incident. The first time the Church of Almighty God was mentioned in connection with the case of “little Bin Bin” was early June 2014, soon after the May 28 McDonald’s murder of Wu Shuoyan (1977–2014) in Zhaoyuan.

The earliest reports, the ones that launched the story, can be traced to official propaganda organizations. One of the first news stories accusing the Church of Almighty God was a report issued by the Henan Province Anti-Cult Association on June 5, 2014. In an article based on a news release from *Legal Evening News* (part of the Chinese state media), the report maintained that Xiaobin’s village had many Church of Almighty God’s followers, and framed attacks like that on Bin Bin as retaliation for his family’s desire to leave the group: “Boy’s eyes... is the price of retreat.” The story was also published in the pro-Chinese Taiwan daily *Want China Times*, from where it found its way to Wikipedia. The *Want China Times* has closed, though the original article can be read on archived sites.

Few Westerners are aware of the long history in China of associating Christians with eye-gouging. Furthermore, behind the association of Christians with eye gouging is a longer history of seeing it as religiously meaningful. Eye-gouging (*Kongyan*) is one of the tortures in the eighteen levels of Hell in Chinese mythology (Chen 2007, 163; Buckley Ebrey 2010, 178). Eye-gouging also is associated with Zhong Kui, a Taoist deity venerated as an expeller of demons (Huang 2012; Little and Eichman 2000, 272). Furthermore, one of the most

important legends about Kuan Yin revolves around Princess Miao Shan, who sacrificed her arms, hands and eyes (Dudbridge 1978).

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, opponents of Western missionaries warned that Christians tore out the eyes and internal organs of Chinese, especially children, either as punishment for apostasy or alchemical purposes (Griffith 1891; Clark 2011, 53 and 226; Clark 2013, 97; Doyle 2015, 5; *The University of Hong Kong Bulletin* 2015). In one source, Chinese readers were warned that Europeans needed the eyes of Chinese to refine silver from lead (Vaudagna 1892). Eye-gouging was popularized during the Boxer Rebellion through pamphlets and didactic cartoon posters (Cleveland 1900; *The Literary Digest* 1900; Cohen 1997, 164–170; Preston 2000, 25–28).

The horrifying incident in Shanxi closely tracked the imagined horrors of anti-Christian rhetoric, to present a golden moment for anti-cult propaganda. Scholars and journalists should be aware that charges of atrocities made by the Chinese government against banned *xie jiao* religious groups often cannot be substantiated. To date, the Chinese government has not produced any evidence to support the accusation that the Church of Almighty God was involved in the attack on Guo Xiaobin. The accusation surfaced only after the McDonald’s murder, some nine months after the investigation had been closed. This incident seems to be a second instance, after the McDonald’s murder in Zhaoyuan, of the government falsely accusing the Church of Almighty God of violent crimes.

## References

*Articles, Arranged Chronologically (all accessed December 2–5, 2017)*

— 27 August 2013

Osborne, Hannah. “China: Organ Trafficker Drugs Boy, 6, and Gouges out His Eyes for Buyer.” *International Business Times*.  
<http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/china-boy-eyes-gouged-organ-trafficking-501815>.

*Reuters*. “Chinese Boy Has Eyes Gouged Out, Possibly for Corneas.”  
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-crime/chinese-boy-has-eyes-gouged-out-possibly-for-corneas-idUSBRE97R0A920130828>.

— 28 August 2013

*Associated Press*, Beijing. “Chinese Police Hunt Woman Who Gouged out Boy’s Eyes.” Reprinted in *The Guardian*.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/aug/28/chinese-boy-eyes-gouged-out>.

*BBC News*. “Young Chinese Boy’s Eyes Gouged out in Attack.”

<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-23846633>.

Cheng, Zheng, and Fan Meiling. “Shanxi 6-Year-Old with Eyes Gouged: Attending Doctor Wept While Discussing his Condition.” *China News*.

<http://www.chinanews.com/sh/2013/08-28/5217032.shtml>.

Sheridan, Michael. “Woman Rips out 6-Year-Old Boy’s Eyes in China, Leaving Child Blind for Life: Authorities.” *New York Daily News*.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/woman-rips-6-year-old-boy-eyes-china-leaving-child-blind-life-authorities-article-1.1439124>.

Taylor, Adam. “Chinese Police Offer \$16,000 Reward to Catch Woman Suspected of Gouging 6-Year-Old’s Eyes Out.” *Business Insider*.

<http://www.businessinsider.com/chinese-woman-gouges-6-year-olds-eyes-out-2013-8>.

*Xinhua News*. “China Police Hunt for Woman Gouging Boy’s Eyes.” Reposted on *Capital News – Kenya*.

<https://www.capitalfm.co.ke/news/2013/08/china-police-hunt-for-woman-gouging-boys-eyes>.

— 29 August 2013

Hou, Liqiang, and Cheng Hong. “Searching for Clues in Eye-Gouging Attack.” *China Daily*.

[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-08/29/content\\_16927875.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-08/29/content_16927875.htm).

— 30 August 2013

*AsiaNews*. “Reward for the Arrest of Organ Trafficker Who Gouged out Child’s Eyes.”

<http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Reward-for-the-arrest-of-organ-trafficker-who-gouged-out-child%27s-eyes-28877.html>.

— 31 August 2013

*Beijing News*. “Aunt of Eye-Gouged Boy in Shanxi Jumps to Her Death; Called Herself a Ghost and God.” Posted on *Sina Wuxi*.

<http://wx.sina.com.cn/news/s/2013-08-31/084124784.html>.

— 1 September 2013

*Beijing Daily*. “Boy’s Aunt Who Jumped in Well Was Mentally Ill.”

<http://news.163.com/13/0901/02/97LEBV8200014AED.html>.

*NetEase*. “Bin Bin Case—The Latest Progress.” *Evening News Shandong*.

<http://health.qlwb.com.cn/2013/0901/33484.shtml>.

— 3 September 2013

*ABC News Australia*. “Chinese Boy Who Had His Eyes Gouged out May Regain Sight Through ‘Electronic’ Vision.”

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-09-04/chinese-boy-in-eye-gouging-attack-to-get-electronic-eyes/4936238>.

Bond, Anthony. “Aunt of Chinese Boy, 6, Who Had His Eyes Gouged out Becomes Prime Suspect after She Jumps to Her Death down Village Well Covered in His Blood.” *The Daily Mail*.

<http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2410172/Aunt-Chinese-boy-6-eyes-gouged-prime-suspect-jumped-death-village-covered-blood.html#ixzz508JYOM2a>.

Hongpeng, Li (for *Legal Evening News*). “Revenge Claimed for Boy With Gouged Eyes: Reporters Verify there is no Dispute or Grievances.” *China News*.

<http://www.chinanews.com/fz/2013/09-03/5239007.shtml>.

Reuters. “Chinese Police Suspect Aunt of Gouging Out Boy’s Eyes.” *Reuters World News*.

<https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-china-boy/chinese-police-suspect-aunt-of-gouging-out-boys-eyes-idUKBRE98307X20130904>.

*Xinhua News*. “Late Aunt Suspected in Eye-gouged Boy Case.” Posted on *China.org.cn*.

[http://www.china.org.cn/china/2013-09/03/content\\_29916177.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/2013-09/03/content_29916177.htm).

— 4 September 2013

*Associated Press* (a). “Aunt Who ‘Gouged out Kid’s Eyes’ Kills Self in Well Jump.” Reprinted in *The New York Post*.

<https://nypost.com/2013/09/04/aunt-who-gouged-out-kids-eyes-kills-self-in-well-jump>.

*Associated Press* (b). “China Police Say Aunt Likely Gouged out Boy’s Eyes.” Reprinted in *Philadelphia Inquirer*.



- <http://newsinfo.inquirer.net/480871/china-police-say-aunt-likely-gouged-out-boys-eyes>.
- Associated Press* (c). “China Police Say Aunt Likely Gouged out Boy’s Eyes, Then Killed Herself.” Posted on Fox News  
<http://www.foxnews.com/world/2013/09/04/police-in-china-suspect-woman-who-gouged-out-boy-eyes-was-aunt-who-later-killed.html>.
- Associated Press* (d). “Chinese Police Suspect Woman Who Gouged out Boy’s Eyes Was Aunt Who Later Killed Herself.” Reprinted in *National Post*.  
<http://nationalpost.com/news/chinese-police-suspect-woman-who-gouged-out-boys-eyes-was-aunt-who-later-killed-herself>.
- Associated Press*, Beijing (a). “Aunt Gouged out Boy’s Eyes, Chinese Authorities Say.” Reprinted in *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/04/aunt-gouged-boys-eyes-chinese>.
- Associated Press*, Beijing (b). “Aunt Suspected of Gouging out Chinese Boy’s Eyes.” Reprinted in *The Guardian*.  
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/04/aunt-suspected-gouging-chinese-boy-eyes>.
- BBC News*. “China Eye-gouge Case: Boy’s Late Aunt Named as Suspect.”  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-china-23940501>.
- Emirates 24/7 News*. “Did Evil Aunt Gouge out 6-year-old Boy’s Eyes?”.  
<http://www.emirates247.com/news/did-evil-aunt-gouge-out-6-year-old-boy-s-eyes-2013-09-04-1.519834>.
- George, Steve. “Police Close Case on Eye Attack but Questions Remain.” *That’s Beijing*.  
<http://www.thatmags.com/beijing/post/1256/police-close-case-on-eye-attack-but-questions-remain>.
- Hou, Liqiang. “Police Name Attacker Who Took Boy’s Eyes.” *China Daily*.  
[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-09/04/content\\_16941830.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-09/04/content_16941830.htm).
- Reuters*. “Chinese Police Suspect Aunt of Gouging out Boy’s Eyes.” Reprinted in *The Chicago Tribune*.  
[http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-09-04/news/sns-rt-china-boy-20130903\\_1\\_chinese-police-six-year-old-boy-corneas](http://articles.chicagotribune.com/2013-09-04/news/sns-rt-china-boy-20130903_1_chinese-police-six-year-old-boy-corneas).
- The Malay Mail Online*. “Hong Kong Doctor Offers Implants to Eye-gouged Boy.”  
<http://www.themalaymailonline.com/world/article/hong-kong-doctor-offers-implants-to-eye-gouged-boy#jyHWJiQOFxmWVJxr.99>.
- The Weekend Australian*. “Aunt Gouged out Boy’s Eyes: Chinese Police.”

<http://www.theaustralian.com.au/news/latest-news/aunt-gouged-out-boys-eyes-china-police/news-story/2f364b3ff38adef1c06b44f4f8e57478>.

Wong, Gillian (for Associated Press). “China Police Say Aunt Likely Gouged Out Boy’s Eyes.” *San Diego Union Tribune*.

<http://www.sandiegouniontribune.com/sdut-china-police-say-aunt-likely-gouged-out-boys-eyes-2013sep04-story.html>.

Yan, Yanhua. “Shanxi Boy’s Eyes Were Gouged; Aunt Announced as Suspect.” *Xinhuanet.com*.

[http://news.xinhuanet.com/photo/2013-09/04/c\\_125316346.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/photo/2013-09/04/c_125316346.htm).

— 5 September 2013

*China Daily.com*. “Police Disclose Details of Blinded Boy Case.”

[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-09/05/content\\_16947100.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2013-09/05/content_16947100.htm).

Sheridan, Michael. “6-year-old Boy’s Aunt Cut out His Eyes in Gruesome Attack in China, Cops Say, as More than \$160,000 in Donations Go to Help Child.” *New York Daily News*.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/6-year-old-boy-aunt-cut-eyes-gruesome-attack-china-police-article-1.1446625>.

*Sydney Morning Herald*. “Boy’s Eyes Gouged Out: Suspect Dead, Say Police.”

<http://www.smh.com.au/world/boys-eyes-gouged-out-suspect-dead-say-police-20130904-2t666>.

*The Wimmera Times*. “Boy’s Eyes Gouged Out: Suspect Dead, Say Police.”

<http://www.mailtimes.com.au/story/1755267/boys-eyes-gouged-out-suspect-dead-say-police/?cs=224>.

Xinhua. “Police Disclose Details of Blinded Boy Case.” Reprinted in *Shanghai Daily*.

<http://mobile.shanghaidaily.com/nation/Police-disclose-details-of-blinded-boy-case/shdaily.shtml>.

Zhou, Laura. “Boy’s Eyes Gouged out by His Aunt, Police Say.” *South China Morning Post*.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1303505/boys-eyes-gouged-out-his-aunt-police-say>.

— 17 September 2013

Hu, Zhaohui. “Liu Xiwei: The Case of Eye-Gouged Boy—Female Suspect was Mentally Ill.” *Guangzhou Hu Zhaohui Lawyer's Blog*.

[http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog\\_5dec1610102env6.html](http://blog.sina.com.cn/s/blog_5dec1610102env6.html).

— 19 September 2013

Li, Li. “Watching Over Our Children.” *Beijing Review*.

[http://www.bjreview.com/nation/txt/2013-09/16/content\\_568053.htm](http://www.bjreview.com/nation/txt/2013-09/16/content_568053.htm).

— 12 December 2013

Miller, Tracy. “Chinese Boy Whose Eyes Were Gouged out Recovers from Prosthetic Eye Surgery.” *New York Daily News*.

<http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/chinese-boy-eyes-gouged-receives-prosthetic-eyes-article-1.1545445>.

Ng, Naomi. “Chinese Boy, Whose Eyes Were Gouged Out, Leaves Hospital.” *CNN*.

<http://www.cnn.com/2013/12/12/world/asia/guo-bin-hospital-release/index.html>.

— 16 December 2013

*New China TV*. “Eye Gouging Victim Leaves Hospital.”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VTesTSSfKs>.

— 1 June 2014

Network of Shanxi Rule of Law. “News that Eye-gouged 6-Year-Old in Linfen was in Almighty God Cult.” *Rule of Law Shandong Network*

<http://www.fzsdzk.com/shengshi/shanxi/2014-06-01/20572.html>.

Lai, Ting-Heng and Staff Reporter. “Chinese Doomsday Cult Expands to Taiwan.” *Want China Times*.

<http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20140602000109&cid=1103>

[The link has been removed, but can be found archived at <https://archive.li/http://www.wantchinatimes.com/news-subclass-cnt.aspx?id=20140602000109&cid=1103>].

— 5 June 2014

Henan Province Anti-Cult Association. “Eye-gouged Boy in Shanxi Quit Almighty God for the Local Church.”

<http://www.hnfxj.org/html/xwpd/xjdg/sjs/zhaoyuan/5120.html>.

— 20 June 2014

Hong, Brendon. “Is This the Scariest Doomsday Sect in China?” *The Daily*

*Beast.*

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/is-this-the-scariest-doomsday-sect-in-china>.

— 7 August 2014

Tsang, Emily. “Blind Bin-Bin Gets Futuristic Glasses to Help Him ‘See’ via Pulses on Tongue.” *South China Morning Post*.

<http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1568287/new-orientation-technology-offers-help-young-eye-gouging-victim-bin>.

— 14 August 2015

Wolfe, Vitamin. “Wishing for the Apocalypse: Ushering in the End Times with Fringe Religions.” *Myanmar Times*.

<https://www.mmtimes.com/lifestyle/15979-wishing-for-the-apocalypse-ushering-in-the-end-times-with-fringe-religions.html>.

— 26 August 2016

Shuang, Feng. “Do You Still Remember the Eyes-Gouged Boy?” *All China Women’s Federation / Women of China*.

<http://www.womenofchina.cn/womenofchina/html1/news/newsmakers/1608/3472-1.htm>.

— 30 July 2017

*Cina Oggi*. “Videos and Propaganda Images of the Chinese Doomsday Cult ‘Church of Almighty God.’” Reprinted in *China Underground*.

<https://china-underground.com/2017/07/30/videos-propaganda-images-chinese-doomsday-cult-church-almighty-god>.

### *Eye-Gouging Themes in China*

#### A. Eye-Gouging in Chinese Mythology

Buckley Ebrey, Patricia. 2010. *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Chen, Fan Pen Li. 2007. *Chinese Shadow Theatre: History, Popular Religion, and Women Warriors*. Montreal: McGill-Queen’s Press.

Dudbridge, Glen. 1978. *The Legend of Miao-Shan*. London: Ithaca Press.

Huang, Amy. 2012. “Zhong Kui, The Demon Queller.” *Shape of Good Fortune*, January 21. Accessed December 10, 2017. <https://blogs.brown.edu/hiaa->

1040h-s01/2012/01/21/zhong-kui-the-demon-queller.

Little, Stephen, and Shawn Eichman. *Taoism and the Arts of China*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

## B. Anti-Christian Eye-Gouging Themes

Cleveland, Harold Irwin. 1900. *Massacres of Christians by Heathen Chinese and Horrors of the Boxers*. Philadelphia: National Publishing Company.

Clark, Anthony E. 2011. *China's Saints: Catholic Martyrdom During the Qing (1644–1911)*. Lanham (Maryland): Lexington Books.

Clark, Anthony E. 2013. "Mandarins and Martyrs of Taiyuan, Shanxi, in Late Imperial China." In *A Voluntary Exile: Chinese Christianity and Cultural Confluence Since 1552*, edited by Anthony E. Clark, 93–116. Lanham (Maryland): Rowman & Littlefield.

Cohen, Paul A. 1997. *History in Three Keys: The Boxers as Event, Experience, and Myth*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Doyle, G. Wright. 2015. *Builders of the Chinese Church: Pioneer Protestant Missionaries and Chinese Church Leaders*. Eugene (Oregon): Wipf and Stock Publishers.

Griffith, John. 1891. *The Cause of the Riots in the Yangtse [Yangzi] Valley: 'A Complete Picture Gallery.'* [Chinese – In Accord with the Imperial Edict: Complete Illustrations of the Heretical Religion]. Hankow, China: n.p. Available online at *MIT–Visualizing Cultures*. Accessed December 5, 2017. [https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/cause\\_of\\_the\\_riots/cr\\_book\\_02.html](https://ocw.mit.edu/ans7870/21f/21f.027/cause_of_the_riots/cr_book_02.html).

Preston, Dana. 2000. *The Boxer Rebellion: The Dramatic Story of China's War on Foreigners That Shook the World in the Summer of 1900*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

*The Literary Digest*. 1900. "Chinese Anti-Christian Cartoons." *The Literary Digest* 21,7:199.

*The University of Hong Kong Bulletin*. 2015. "Grisly Rumours and Secret Spaces." *The University of Hong Kong Bulletin* 26, 2 (May). Accessed December 5, 2017.

[https://www4.hku.hk/pubunit/Bulletin/2015\\_May\\_Vol.16\\_No.2/research/page2.html](https://www4.hku.hk/pubunit/Bulletin/2015_May_Vol.16_No.2/research/page2.html).

Vaudagna, [Father] Angelo. 1892. "Notizie—Nu-Pè (Cina)." *Le Missioni Cattoliche. Bullettino Settimanale Illustrato dell'opera La Propagazione Della Fede* 21:218–219.

*“Fake News” About The Church of Almighty God*

Introvigne, Massimo. 2017. “‘Cruel Killing, Brutal Killing, Kill the Beast’: Investigating the 2014 McDonald’s ‘Cult Murder’ in Zhaoyuan.” *The Journal of CESNUR* 1:61–73. Accessed December 12, 2017. [http://cesnur.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/tjoc\\_1\\_1\\_6\\_introvigne\\_ter.pdf](http://cesnur.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/tjoc_1_1_6_introvigne_ter.pdf).

## Book Reviews

---

Rebecca Stott, *In the Days of Rain. A Daughter. A Father. A Cult.* London: 4th Estate (Harper Collins), 2017. 400 pages. Hc. £ 16.99. ISBN: 9780008209162.

Reviewed by Massimo Introvigne, *Center for Studies on New Religions*,  
maxintrovigne@gmail.com

Anti-cult literature is normally repetitious, and rarely of interest for scholars. “Atrocity stories” by “apostates,” the technical term used by sociologists to designate angry ex-members who have left groups they regard as “cults,” in particular, tend to repeat the same clichés. *In the Days of Rain* by Rebecca Stott, one of many anti-cult “apostate” books by ex-members of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church (PBCC), deserves, however, more attention. The author is both a well-known novelist and author in unrelated fields and a self-styled apostate from the PBCC, not a frequent combination and one that made her book well-supported by publicists and generously reviewed in mainline media.

Stephen Kent, part of a tiny group of academics who support the anti-cult movement, recently published in an anti-cult journal an article claiming that mainline scholars ignore the “apostate” accounts because of their prejudices, and that in fact apostates are often more reliable than academics (Kent and Swanson 2017). This very review proves that we *do* read apostate accounts, but finding them accurate is an entirely different matter. Even Kent, perhaps, would approach Stott’s book with caution. She left the PBCC when she was seven: a miniature apostate, or a wannabe one. She claims she used a manuscript left to her by her father, a real apostate and a well-known member of the PBCC in Brighton, England. But she declares that the manuscript was unfinished, and how

much she adds and embellishes we cannot know. For a crucial number of incidents, which occupy a good part of her books, she relies on accounts of other apostates or critics of the Brethren.

The claim that she somewhat knows the world of the Brethren first-hand is also undermined by gross theological inaccuracies. She reports for example that the Brethren's central practice of "breaking bread" is based on the doctrine of "transubstantiation": "the bread was supposed to be his [Jesus'] body and the wine his blood" (36). Readers would recognize the Roman Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, which is not shared by Protestants in general and certainly not by PBCC. Stott also mistakenly attributes to the Brethren the Origenian theory of pre-existence, according to which souls "had pre-existed" human bodies (303).

She claims a few years of Brethren indoctrination were enough for giving her a life-long solid knowledge of the Bible, but we read that she likes the Book of Job, particularly because of the part "about the whale" (226). In Job, there is in fact a passing reference to a whale ("Am I a sea, or a whale, that thou settest a watch over me?", 7:12), but readers who would have the impression that Stott here is confusing Job with Jonas might perhaps be forgiven. All this becomes less surprising when we learn that, after age 7, Stott was exposed to Baptism, Methodism, Anglicanism, Roman Catholicism, Hinduism, Darwinism, Secular Humanism, and the hippie counterculture, all sprinkled with generous doses of LSD (200).

Which Brethren was Stott a member of? She calls them "Exclusive Brethren," distinguished from the more moderate "Plymouth Brethren," and at her time they had not yet adopted the name "Plymouth Brethren Christian Church." But both "Plymouth Brethren" and "Exclusive Brethren" are used for different groups. Based on a classification devised by the U.S. Census in 1936, and later expanded by scholars (see Introvigne 2018), we can say that Stott joined the Brethren IV, which her family later left to become part of Brethren X. Brethren IV, Stott claims, were once just another Protestant fundamentalist denomination, but became a "cult" during the period when they were led by James Taylor, Jr. (1899–1970), i.e. between 1959 and 1970, when the distinctive Brethren rules of separation from non-Brethren (with whom they, typically, would not share a meal) and society in general were tightened.

Stott's family left the Brethren IV in 1970 and became shortly part of the Brethren X, also called "Post-Aberdeen Outs," as they left after the controversies



surrounding the Aberdeen Conference. At this conference, held shortly before his death, Taylor Jr. was accused not only of criticism some regarded as too harsh and abrasive against his opponents, but also of erratic behavior, of drinking alcohol in excess, and of attitudes disrespectful of women, culminating, or so Stott claims, in an alleged relationship with a married woman. Taylor, the woman in question, and her husband all denied that the relationship ever existed. Stott's father was not a witness to the events, and relied on the accounts by the anti-Taylor faction.

There is convincing evidence that the latter accusations were largely false and were made during a campaign aimed at destroying Taylor's authority by those critical of his leadership. Three authors of books echoing these accusations, including the well-known Dutch evangelical theologian Willem Johannes Ouweneel, publicly recanted their allegations. In 1990, court cases pending in the District Court of Utrecht and the Court of Appeal of Amsterdam against Ouweneel and his publisher were settled, with the Dutch theologian recognizing as reliable a number of documents and witness testimonies showing that most accusations against Taylor Jr. had been fabricated by his opponents (a copy of the settlement agreement is in the archives of CESNUR). Stott is aware of the court cases, but attributes their conclusions to the cleverness of Brethren's lawyers. She continues to believe in the anti-Taylor documents, which were the very foundation of the Brethren X community her father shortly decided to join, before leaving Christianity altogether and ending up in jail for embezzling funds from his company in order to support his gambling activities.

Rebecca Stott was socialized into the anti-cult community, and spent time with exit counselors, who try to extricate "victims" from the "cults" through a "process" "they used to call [...] 'deprogramming'" (302)—Stott's words—although later they changed its name to "exit counseling" for reasons the author prefers not to explain. She even attended a "twelve-week course on the Social Psychology of Cults and Totalitarianism" by Alex Stein (380) and read books against the Brethren, including one by journalist Michael Bachelard, whose diatribes against Brethren IV are particularly vicious. She acquired from the anti-cult milieu a taste for the hyperbole, apparent in sentences such as the one mentioning "the thousands of families that the Brethren have tortured" (33). And she finally found an explanation for the Brethren's success in their practice of "a powerful form of brainwashing" (132).

Nothing is new, here, with respect to hundreds of anti-cult books, but some specific remarks about Brethren IV are in order. Stott quotes two contributions by sociologists on Brethren IV in her bibliography, the old classic chapter by Bryan Wilson (1926–2004) (Wilson 1967) and an article by Matthew Tont (Tont 2001), but does not appear to use them in the text. A familiarity with Wilson’s sociology in general would have warned her against the use of the word “cult” and perhaps helped her realize that the majority of sociologists of religion reject brainwashing theories as pseudo-science. Tont would have contributed to a more balanced approach, including the positive contributions Brethren made to the communities where they live. Conspicuous for its absence is contemporary sociology about the Brethren. Names such as Bernard Doherty and Liselotte Frisk seem to be unknown to Stott, even if the former has written together with an ex-member of PBCC, Laura Dyason.

Sociology in general would have helped Stott realize that some of the features she sees as typical of “cults,” including the prohibition “no sex before marriage” (142), are in fact shared by hundreds of conservative religious organizations throughout the world. Doherty, in particular, would have told her that, if one insists in using an outdated terminology, the Brethren went from sect to “cult” in the 1960s, but they went back from “cult” to sect later (see Doherty 2013). Stott fails to see Taylor Jr.’s retrenchment against the background of the liberal 1960s, which were a cause of concern for all conservative Christians, and dismisses the following mainstreaming as merely cosmetic or the work of public relations agencies. She cannot know, since she has admittedly kept no contact with the Brethren, and simply relies on anti-Brethren literature.

Stott emphasizes the suicides within Brethren IV and attributes them to the church’s strictness. The Brethren have refuted several of Scott’s claims about suicide, or alleged suicide, incidents, some of which were classified by British authorities as accidental deaths (Plymouth Brethren Christian Church 2017). Without access to the legal files (Stott relies herself on press clippings and anti-Brethren Internet forums), these incidents cannot be meaningfully discussed. Social scientists would however ask for statistics, as the relevant question would be whether suicide is more prevalent among Brethren IV than, say, among Roman Catholics or secular humanists. No evidence that such is the case is offered.

Incidentally, Stott supplies unwittingly an argument in favor of the Brethren by not mentioning any incident of sexual abuse of children. There have been isolated

incidents among Brethren IV, as in most other communities, but some anti-cultists have claimed that paedophilia is more present among the Brethren than elsewhere. The fact that Stott, who has not left any stone unturned in her search for gossip about the Brethren, reports no such incident at all seems significant.

Stott also derives, mostly from Bachelard, the impression that contemporary Brethren IV schools, of which again she has no direct experience, are backwards institutions of inferior quality. Doherty, Frisk and her colleague Sanja Nilsson, and the undersigned have visited Brethren IV schools in five different countries, finding that computer technology is state-of-the-art, several of the classic literary masterpieces she describes as banned in her times are available in the school libraries, Darwinism is taught, although as a “theory” and not as a fact (as is the case in many public schools in the American South, where school boards are dominated by Evangelicals), and students perform better than average in national tests. True, they do not eat with their non-Brethren teachers—but they do exist, and I met in rural New York State a *Roman Catholic* principal of a Brethren school, which would perhaps be a surprise to Stott, who emphasizes the extreme anti-Catholicism of Brethren IV. Parenthetically, I am myself a Roman Catholic and have been welcome in the Brethren IV communities I visited as a scholar.

Concerning the suicide cases, Stott argues that in the U.K. Brethren were not held responsible because of the misguided respect of British judges for religious liberty and pluralism. It is unclear whether Stott would rather advocate a Soviet style of justice. But the claim, hardly believable with respect to the British judiciary, would become ridiculous in France, a country known for its sustained hostility against “cults.” In fact, the French governmental body in charge of watching “cults” regarded Brethren schools as suspicious even before they were opened (MIVILUDES 2006, 16, 18, and 24). When, however, they started operating, the French Ministry of Education sent its inspectors, and they concluded that students in Brethren schools enjoyed a quality education and were generally well adjusted (Moracchini, Benoist and Gorge 2014). In other countries, such as Sweden, Brethren schools were accused of perpetuating gender stereotypes—but so were Catholic, Jewish, Muslim and Evangelical schools.

Stott’s book is at times annoyingly arrogant, as she seems very much persuaded that she is part of a literate elite inherently superior to those, mostly rural, unenlightened folks who still believe, as Max Weber (1864–1920) would call it,

in an “enchanted” world inhabited by angels, demons, Heaven, Hell, original sin, and—to say it shortly—God. A look at the recently published book by Jason Josephson Storm would perhaps disenchant Stott about disenchantment (Josephson Storm 2017). Josephson Storm notes that, although no longer (and perhaps never) a majority view, the myth of disenchantment is still prevailing in some subcultures, most notably among journalists of the mainline media. That may explain some surprisingly favorable reviews of Stott’s book. But, in all fairness, there are other reasons for them. When she breaks free of the anti-cult rhetorics, Stott writes in an English better than most, and tells in her own passionate voice the story of the dysfunctional, yet loving, relationship between a rebellious daughter and a gambling-addict father. I would respectfully suggest that Stott employs these talents of her in fields other than religion.

## References

- Doherty, Bernard. 2013. “The ‘Brethren Cult Controversy’: Dissecting a Contemporary Australian ‘Social Problem.’” *Alternative Spirituality and Religion Review* 4(1):25–48.
- Introvigne, Massimo. 2018 (forthcoming). *Plymouth Brethren*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Josephson Storm, Jason. 2017. *The Myth of Disenchantment: Magic, Modernity, and the Birth of the Social Sciences*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.
- Kent, Stephen, and Kayla Swanson. 2017. “The History of Credibility Attacks against Former Cult Members.” *International Journal of Cultic Studies* 8(2):1–35.
- MIVILUDES (Mission interministérielle de vigilance et de lutte contre les dérives sectaires). 2006. *Rapport au Premier ministre Année 2005*. Paris: MIVILUDES.
- Moracchini, Charles, Sylviane Benoist and Noël Gorge. 2014. “Rapport d’inspection d’établissement hors contrat Cours privé Les Cardamines, Z.A. Les Lebreys, 43400 Le Chambon sur Lignon.” Copy in the archives of CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions), Torino, Italy.
- Plymouth Brethren Christian Church. 2017. “Comments on ‘In the Days of Rain’ by Rebecca Stott” (undated press release).

- Tonts, Matthew. 2001. "The Exclusive Brethren and an Australian Rural Community." *Journal of Rural Studies* 17:309–322.
- Wilson, Bryan R.[onald]. 1967. "The Exclusive Brethren: A Case Study in the Evolution of a Sectarian Ideology." In Bryan R.[onald] Wilson, *Patterns of Sectarianism. Organization and Ideology in Social and Religious Movements*, London: Heinemann Educational Books, 287–342.



# The Journal of CESNUR

