

## Daesoon Jinrihoe: An Introduction

Massimo Introvigne

*CESNUR (Center for Studies on New Religions)*

maxintrovigne@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT:** “Jeungsanism” is a contested category, including a great variety of Korean new religions worshipping Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909) as the incarnated *Gucheon Sangje*, the “God of the Ninth Heaven” and the Supreme God of the Universe. Kang gathered a sizable following, but did not appoint a successor. Among one hundred or more “Jeungsanist” religions, those claiming a lineage originating from Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958), who was not a direct disciple of Kang but claimed to have received a revelation from him, eventually emerged as the largest group. Divisions among Jo’s disciples occurred ten years after his death and lead to the foundation of Daesoon Jinrihoe in 1969 by Park Wudang (1917–1995 according to the lunar calendar traditionally adopted by the movement, or 1918–1996 according to the solar calendar). The article examines the history, main doctrines, practices and artistic achievements of Daesoon Jinrihoe, which claims six million members and is regarded by many as the largest Korean new religion.

**KEYWORDS:** Daesoon Jinrihoe, Jeungsanism, Kang Jeungsan, Jo Jeongsan, Park Wudang, Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex.

### *Kang Jeungsan*

Daesoon Jinrihoe (pronounced “Daesoon-jill-lee-h’weigh,” meaning “the Fellowship of Daesoon Truth”) is the largest movement among around one hundred groups (not all still existing today) that originated in Korea from the activities of Kang Il-Sun, known to his disciples as Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909). Kang’s preaching is best understood within the context of the religious effervescence that manifested itself in Korea in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a reaction against both foreign imperialism—Western, Chinese, and Japanese—and the sufferings of impoverished peasants within the framework of the rigid Korean class system.

The leading prophetic figure who emerged in Korea in this period was Choe Je-u (1824–1864), who in 1860 claimed to have received a revelation as well as a mystical talisman and a mantra from the Supreme God (*Sangje*, 上帝). He founded a new religion called Donghak (“Eastern Learning,” as opposed to “Western Learning,” i.e. Christianity) and started gathering followers. Choe’s background was neo-Confucian, but both his concept of God, which some saw as leaning towards monotheism, and his progressive social ideas made the authorities suspect him of being close to Christianity, which at that time was banned and persecuted in Korea (Kallander 2013). He was executed in 1864, but Donghak continued and played a major role in the peasant rebellion of 1894, known as the Donghak Revolution.

The Donghak rebels came to control a significant part of the Korean territory, before being defeated by the Korean government, supported first by Chinese and then by Japanese troops (Rhee 2007). A bloody repression followed, and Donghak was reorganized as Cheondogyo, which claimed to be a non-political religious movement, although some of its leaders played a crucial role in the fight for Korean independence from Japan. Cheondogyo remains present to this day in both South and North Korea (see Lee 2016, 44–8).

Kang Jeung-san was born in Gobu-gun, Jeolla Province (present-day Deokcheon-myeon of Jeongeup City, North Jeolla Province, Korea) on September 19, 1871. According to his followers’ hagiographic accounts, miraculous phenomena surrounded his birth and infancy. At age twenty, in 1891, he married a lady from Gimje prefecture called Jeong (1874–1928) and started running a village school in the home of his brother-in-law. He had studied Buddhism, Confucianism, and Daoism, and was respected in the region as a man endowed with divine powers. Reportedly, he had also personally met the celebrated scholar of the *Jeong-yeok* (*The Corrected Book of Changes*, a revised Korean version of the Chinese classic *I Ching*), Kim Il-Bu (1826–1898).

Kang predicted that the 1894 Donghak rebellion would fail, and persuaded his followers not to participate in the fighting. With his accurate prediction of Donghak’s defeat, Kang proposed the idea that the renewal of the world would be achieved by peaceful means and that armed revolutions were counter-productive. This was the attitude he maintained when confronted with the growing Japanese presence in his country, which would lead to annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910 (Chong 2016).

Between 1897 and 1900, Kang wandered around Korea for three years. In 1900, he returned home to continue what he regarded as his mission. His disciples believe that, in the summer of 1901, he opened the Great Dao of Heaven and Earth through a 49 days divine *Gongbu* (i.e. unremitting efforts continuously accomplished during the 49 days) at Daewonsa Temple in the Moak Mountain, North Jeolla Province, Korea, which he concluded on July 5, 1901. They claim that, during this period of fasting, he also exercised the judgment upon the deities in charge of the Former World (*Seoncheon*). From 1901 until his passing in 1909, Kang Jeungsan performed many religious rituals, known as “the Reordering of the Universe” (*Cheonji Gongsa*, 天地公事), and gathered a sizable number of disciples (Chong 2016).

On December 25, 1907, Kang Jeungsan and his followers were arrested by the Japanese police on charges that they were raising an army against Japanese authorities. They were later cleared of all charges and released from prison around February 4, 1908. Freed from jail, Kang continued to practice his rituals of reordering the universe, aimed at universal salvation for all the peoples of the world, until he passed away on June 24, 1909 at the Donggok Clinic he had established in 1908 (Chong 2016, 17–58).

### “Jeungsanism”

Several Korean scholars use the category of “Jeungsanism” to indicate the numerous new religions that recognize the divinity of Kang Jeungsan. Other Korean scholars have warned that these religions are very different, and indicating common features of “Jeungsanism” may lead to improper generalizations (Yoon and Introvigne, this issue of *The Journal of CESNUR*).

It is virtually impossible to account for dozens of movements included into the broader category of “Jeungsanism,” and I will only mention here the largest ones. Kang Jeungsan did not appoint a successor. Around September 1911, Goh Pan-Lye (1880–1935), a female disciple of Kang Jeungsan, gathered around her a number of his followers in the first organized “Jeungsanist” movement, which she called Seondogyo. Goh Pan-Lye had received from Kang Jeungsan the title of *Subu*, “Head Lady,” and there is no doubt that she was an important disciple of the master. However, the new religions in her lineage insist that she was the only *Subu*, and some even regard her as a divine incarnation at the same level of Kang

Jeungsan, while others insist that, the day before he died, Kang appointed a second *Subu*, Mal-Sun (1890–1911), a daughter of his disciple Kim Hyeong-Ryeol (1862–1932), and performed with her a significant religious ritual, which indicated that Goh Pan-Lye’s role was not unique (Lee 1965, 412–13; Hong 1991, 6–7).

Goh’s male cousin, Cha Gyeong-Seok (1880–1936), eventually became the dominant force in her movement, and tried to keep her under his control. In 1918, Goh separated from Cha and established her own religious order, which after her death in 1935 split into several rival factions. In the 1920s, Cha’s branch, known as Bocheonism (“Doctrine of Universal Heaven”), became the largest Korean new religion. However, it declined rapidly and split in turn into many factions. Cha himself abandoned the faith in Kang Jeungsan in 1928 and died in 1936.

The other leading disciple of Kang Jeungsan, Kim Hyeong-Ryeol, first promoted Kang’s widow, Jeong, as the master’s successor, then went on to establish a branch known as Maitreya Buddhism, which in turn went through several schisms. All these branches are called “Jeungsan Branches” by Korean scholars, due to their association with the belief that, after his death, Jeungsan spiritually resided in the Maitreya Buddha statue in the Geumsansa Temple at Moak Mountain (Flaherty 2011, 334–38).

Goh Pan-Lye eventually joined forces with Lee Sangho (1888–1967), who recognized her as Kang’s successor, and later, with his brother Lee Jeongnip (1895–1968), established various organizations and finally Jeungsangyo Headquarters. One former member of Jeungsangyo Headquarters, Ahn Un-san (1922–2012), established Jeung San Do, which became the second largest Jeungsanist branch after Daesoon Jinrihoe. It is currently led by Ahn’s son, Ahn Gyeong-jeon (1954–).

### *Jo Jeongsan*

Another large branch emerged in the 1920s around Jo Cheol-Je, known to his disciples as Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958). Unlike the founders of other branches, Jo Jeongsan was not a direct disciple of Kang Jeungsan, but claimed to have received a revelation from him after his passing. Jo Jeongsan was born on December 4,

1895 in Hoemun-ri, Chilseo-myeon of Haman-gun, South Gyeongsang Province (present-day Hoemun village, Hoesan-ri, Chilseo-myeon of Haman, South Gyeongsang Province), Korea. He followed his father, who had to escape to Manchuria due to his anti-Japanese activities. Kang Jeungsan and Jo Jeongsan never met. However, according to the latter's disciples, when on April 28, 1909, Kang Jeungsan saw a train passing, which had Jo Jeongsan heading to Manchuria, then aged 15, aboard, he stated: "A man can do anything at the age of 15 if he is able to take his identification tag (*hopae*) with him." Jo Jeongsan's disciples believe that, by these words, Kang Jeungsan was recognizing him as his successor (Ko 2016).

On February 10, 1917, while he was still in Manchuria, Jo Jeongsan claimed to have received a revelation from Kang Jeungsan. When he returned to Korea, he met Kang Jeungsan's sister Seondol (ca. 1881–1942), who gave him a sealed envelope that Kang had left for his successor (Ko 2016). He also took care of Kang Jeungsan's mother Kwon (1850–1926) and his daughter Sun-Im (1904–1959). Later, however, Sun-Im left Jo Jeongsan and formed her separate branch. In the meantime, Jo Jeongsan had established land-reclaiming agricultural projects with his followers in Anmyeon Island and Wonsan Island throughout the 1920s–1930s, while he was working at setting up a religious organization, which he finally incorporated in 1925 as Mugeukdo (Ko 2016).

Mugeukdo prospered and Jo Jeongsan's legitimacy as the successor of Kang Jeungsan was confirmed by his obtaining, in addition to the sealed envelope, a cabinet called the "Holy Chest" (a collection of holy relics believed to confer the continuation of an orthodox religious lineage) and Kang Jeungsan's own bones (Ko 2016). Due to both a 1936 edict disbanding a number of Korean religious movements, labeled by the Japanese as "pseudo-religions," and the Maintenance of Public Order Act of 1941, Jo Jeongsan was forced to dissolve Mugeukdo in 1941 (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2016, 203–5).

Jo Jeongsan continued his religious activities clandestinely and, after Japan's defeat in 1945, he reconstituted Mugeukdo. In 1948, the new headquarters were established in Bosu-dong of Busan City, South Gyeongsang Province (present-day Bosu-dong, Jung-gu of Busan Metropolitan City), Korea. In 1950, Jo Jeongsan changed the name of the order to Taegeukdo. After defining the rituals and rules of Taegeukdo, Jo Jeongsan designated Park Han-Gyeong, later known as Park Wudang (1917–1995 according to the lunar calendar traditionally

adopted by the movement, or 1918–1996 according to the solar calendar), as his successor, and passed away on March 6, 1958.

### *Park Wudang*

Park Wudang was born on November 30, 1917 in Banggok-ri, Jangyeon-myeon of Goesan-gun, North Chungcheong Province. He worked as a school teacher but was forced into labor during the Japanese colonial period. He joined the movement in 1946. After Jo Jeongsan's death, Taegeukdo continued as a united religious order under the leadership of Park Wudang for ten years. In 1968, however, some executive members at the headquarters disputed Park Wudang's authority, and these conflicts led him to leave Busan in 1968 and reorganize the movement in Seoul under the name of Daesoon Jinrihoe in 1969. Headquarters were built at Junggok-dong, Seongdong-gu (present-day Junggok-dong, Gwangjin-gu) of Seoul. The name Taegeukdo remained with a faction led for a few years by one of Jo Jeongsan's sons, Jo Yongnae (1934–2004).

Thanks to Park Wudang's effort, Daesoon Jinrihoe experienced a rapid expansion and became the largest new religion of Korea. In 1986, a large-scale temple complex was inaugurated in Yeosu-gun, Gyeonggi Province (present-day Yeosu City), Korea, followed by another temple in Jeju in 1989. In 1991, Daejin University was founded in Pocheon-gun (present-day Pocheon City), Gyeonggi Province, and became one of the three Korean accredited universities operated by new religious movements (the others belonging to the Unification Church and Won Buddhism). In 1992, the Pocheon Cultivation Temple Complex was constructed in Pocheon-gun (present-day Pocheon City), and the establishment of the Daejin Medical Foundation followed thereafter. In 1993, the movement's headquarters were moved to Yeosu. In 1995, another temple was established in Goseong-gun, Gangwon Province (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2016, 205–6).

Park Wudang passed away on December 4, 1995. According to the doctrine of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the succession of the movement's orthodoxy includes only three leaders: Kang Jeungsan, Jo Jeongsan, and Park Wudang. After the latter's passing, the order is directed through a committee system. The constitution of the order regulates the quite complicated organization of the movement. The highest authority is vested in the Central Council, which determines all

administrative matters while auditing the general affairs of the movement. The four divisions of the Board of Religious Order Affairs take charge of the temple affairs, the events, cultivation, and the study of the doctrine. All the divisions and organizations of Daesoon Jinrihoe are audited by the Board of Audit and Inspection, whose Committee of Discipline judges the breaches of the constitution and may take disciplinary measures (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2010, 26–7; Daesoon Jinrihoe 2018).

The decision not to appoint an individual successor of Park Wudang was not shared by all leaders of the movement, and controversies followed. In fact, the disputes had motivations preceding Park Wudang's death, and some divisions had already occurred during his last years. On the other hand, what eventually lead to schism was a controversy about the divinization of Park Wudang, i.e. on whether he should be recognized as a divine incarnation together with Kang Jeungsan and Jo Jeongsan, who had been in turn divinized.

The faction favorable to the divinization was led by Yi Yu-jong (1936–2010), who at that time was the chairperson of the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex, and was also accused of administrative wrongdoings by his opponents. The controversy degenerated in physical confrontation between the opponents and the followers of Yi in 1999 and 2000, and the police had to intervene (Jorgensen 2001; 2018; a source that however exaggerate the scope of the incidents by relying on hostile accounts).

In the end, the anti-Yi faction remained in control of the Yeosu Headquarters. Yi's followers, however, managed to take control of the Junggok Temple in Seoul, where Yi proclaimed himself the successor of Park. This was not the end of the schisms, as Yi's faction further separated into three main rival groups, currently headquartered respectively at the Junggok Temple in Seoul, in Pocheon, and Goesan. The Goesan branch is now known as Daejin Sungjuhoe. All these factions recognize Park Wudang as a divine incarnation or the Buddha Maitreya, and remain much smaller than the largest Daesoon Jinrihoe body, headquartered in Yeosu, which has not divinized Park.

After Yi's death, in 2013, the Seoul and Pocheon schismatic branches attended a council at the Yeosu Headquarters with the aim of “normalizing” their relationship with the parent body. The three groups “agreed to disagree” on doctrinal issues, particularly on the divinization of Park Wudang, but agreed to manage jointly Daejin University and Jesaeng Hospital, the movement's main

health facility, and to peacefully coexist in the superior interest of the Daesoon Truth. The Goesan and other minor branches did not participate in the 2013 council, and remain bitter rivals of the Yeosu's main group.

These major crises following Park Wudang's passing did not stop the expansion of the movement. In 1997, a giant Maitreya Buddha statue was enshrined in the Geumgangsan Toseong Training Temple, a temple complex completed in 1996 in the Geumgang Mountain area, where Park Wudang was also buried (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2010, 25).

The three major activities of Daesoon Jinrihoe, which include relief and charity, social welfare, and education and training, also prospered (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2010, 36–41). The movement insists that 70% of the money it raises is devoted to these social activities. The Daejin University Educational Foundation manages Daejin University in Pocheon City and six high schools in Korea. Daejin University also operates two branch campuses in Harbin and Suzhou, in China, and its educational achievements are a source of pride for the movement's members.

The Daejin Medical Foundation began operations in 1992 and the already mentioned and well-respected Bundang Jesaeng Hospital, in Bundang-gu of Seongnam City, Gyeonggi Province, was established in 1998. Two more hospitals are currently under construction. The Daesoon Jinrihoe Welfare Foundation provides local health and welfare services in the area around the movement's headquarters in Yeosu, with a particular focus on treatment and services for the elderly. It operates Daejin Elderly Nursing Facilities, Daejin Geriatric Hospital, Daejin Elderly Welfare Center, and Daejin Youth Training Center (Daesoon Jinrihoe Welfare Foundation 2016; see also Šorytè, this issue of *The Journal of CESNUR*). The educational and charitable activities of Daesoon Jinrihoe greatly benefited the public image of the movement, which is increasingly regarded in Korea as a legitimate part of the country's religious pluralism.

In addition to the large temple complexes, Daesoon Jinrihoe spread its doctrines and rituals through over 200 Fellowship Buildings, halls, and more than 2,000 smaller Centers for the Propagation of Virtue, all over South Korea. These numbers raise the question of how many members the movement has, a central question for Daesoon Jinrihoe. The Korean census in 1995 found 62,000 Koreans who indicated Daesoon Jinrihoe as their religious affiliation,



and they were even less in the census of 2005. The movement itself claims some six million followers. While the last figure may also include mere sympathizers, the census' result was clearly grossly underestimated, and not consistent with the crowds attending both special ceremonies and the daily activities in thousands of Daesoon Jinrihoe's branches throughout the country. It seems clear that a large part of that almost half of Koreans who keep answering census questionnaires by indicating that they do not belong to any religion, in fact understand the question as referring to the traditional religions, and the figure hides a substantial number of followers of the new religions, including Daesoon Jinrihoe (Baker 2016, 1–2).

### *Main Theological Ideas*

Daesoon Jinrihoe is a movement that believes in the existence of a Supreme God, Gucheon Sangje, the God of the Ninth Heaven, who supervises the creation and change of all things in Heaven and Earth (Kim 2015).

Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that, throughout thousands of years, the universe descended into a miserable state of affairs and “lost its regular order,” with conflicts and grievances accumulating at all levels (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2010, 8–13). On the human plane, this involved the West and not only the East. Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that the Catholic Jesuit priest, Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), unsuccessfully attempted to construct an earthly paradise through his missionary work in China. Yet, the reason he did not succeed was due to the deplorable customs of the Confucianism of his time. However, he opened the border between Heaven and Earth, with the consequence that “the divine beings who were not able to cross each other's territory, staying at their own, could come and go freely” (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2016, 212).

After his death, the movement teaches, Ricci led the gods of the civilization of the East to the West, which favored the flourishing of the advanced Western cultures. They developed following a heavenly model but eventually succumbed to materialism, greed, and lack of respect for divine beings, which led to destroying the order, distorting the Dao, and losing the ordinate way of human affairs. Due to this, Heaven and Earth fell into confusion and crisis, and came on the verge of annihilation.

As the crisis of the Former World (*Seoncheon*) also extended to the spirit world, all the divine spirits, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas petitioned Sangje to intervene. Accepting their requests, he started a “Great Itineration” (procession throughout the universe) visiting the three realms of the world (Heaven, Earth, and Humankind), aimed at solving all grievances and ushering in the advent of a glorious Later World (*Hucheon*) (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2014, 12–3). The passage from the old to the new world is called *Gaebyeok* (Great Transformation), a familiar millenarian concept known in Korean religion. The passage from a Former World to a Later World was predicted by Kim Il-Bu and connected to his prophecy of a great change in the universe, which was based on his interpretation of the *I Ching*. Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that the new world Kim Il-Bu predicted is in fact the one created by Kang Jeungsan. By equilibrating Yin and Yang, divine beings and human beings shall be unified and a 50,000-year earthly paradise shall be established, where humans will enjoy good health, long life, and eternal happiness and wealth (Baker 2008, 86–7).

The word “Daesoon” refers to Sangje’s Great Itineration of the world, but is used by Daesoon Jinrihoe with a plurality of meanings, including the cosmic movement of truth (*jinri*), which comes to permeate the world. During his Great Itineration, the movement believes, Sangje descended to the West and finally came to Korea and entered the golden statue of Maitreya Buddha in the Geumsansa Temple at the Moak Mountain, North Jeolla Province. There, Sangje revealed his teachings on the Great Dao of redemption to the founder of Donghak, Choe Je-u. Since, however, Choe Je-u was unable to overcome the system of Confucianism and open the new era, Sangje withdrew his mandate from him. Choe Je-u was arrested and executed in 1864. Sangje then incarnated in 1871 as Kang Jeungsan (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2016, 212–3). He opened the world of mutual beneficence of the Later World, which would save all sentient beings, through his nine-years Reordering of the Universe from 1901 to 1909 (see Kim 2016). However, in order to fully realize this world, the mission of Jo Jeongsan and Park Wudang, who were also bestowed with the heavenly mandate, was necessary.

The *Jeong-yeong* is the canonical scripture of Daesoon Jinrihoe and records Kang Jeungsan’s life and teachings and his Reordering of the Universe. Other branches of believers in Kang Jeungsan have different versions of the scripture. The *Jeong-yeong* clarifies the religious activities of Sangje, the Lord of the

Universe and the Ultimate Reality. It also suggests the tenets, creeds, and objectives of Daesoon Jinrihoe. In fact, these tenets are strictly interconnected and hard to define separately from each other. However, in order to facilitate their understanding, they are presented as four tenets. (Joo 2016; Baker 2016, 8–11).

The first is “the creative conjunction of Yin and Yang” (*Eumyang hapdeok*, 陰陽合德). In the Former World, due to the mutual conflicts of Yin and Yang all sort of confrontations emerged (see Baker 2016, 9). Daesoon Jinrihoe tries to promote mutual beneficence through cooperation and harmony of Yin and Yang (which is also depicted on the Korean flag). The second principle is “the harmonious union of divine beings and human beings” (*Sinin johwa*, 神人調化). Spirit corresponds to Yin and human beings to Yang. In the Later World, they are not separated. In Korean religious tradition in general, gods, spirits, and humans are not, in the words of scholar of Korean religions Donald Baker, “totally different types of beings” (Baker 2016, 9), and their harmonious co-existence is seen as a desirable goal. Daesoon Jinrihoe claims to offer appropriate techniques to reach this traditional goal of Korean spirituality.

The third tenet of Daesoon doctrine is “the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence” (*Haewon sangsaeng*, 解冤相生). Grievances were the principal problem of the Former World, and they extended to all three realms, as well as to divine beings (Baker 2016, 10; Kim 2016, 2017). Through his Great Itineration, Sangje opened a road to resolve the grievances of the three realms, which had been accumulated for ages. However, in order to enter into a world free of conflict, humans shall now cooperate by cultivating and propagating the truth, and avoiding the creation of new grievances.

The fourth principle is “the perfected unification with Dao” (*Dotong jin'gyeong*, 道通真境). This refers to the realization of earthly immortality in an earthly paradise through the renewal of human beings and the recreation of the world (Baker 2016, 10–1). In fact, the world will become one clan or family, and all humanity will be governed without force and punishment, according to divine laws and principles. Officials will be moderate and wise, and will avoid any unnecessary authoritarianism. Humans will be free from worldly desires caused by resentment, avarice, and lewdness. The three kinds of disasters coming from water, fire, and wind will disappear from the world. Humans will be given freedom from diseases and death, i.e. eternal youth and immortality. They will be able to travel freely wherever they wish, and their wisdom will be so complete that they

will know all the secrets of present, past, and future. And the whole world will be an earthly paradise filled with bliss and joy (see Kim 2015, 187–94).

### *The Cultivation*

The practice (“cultivation”) of Daesoon Jinrihoe is summarized in its Creeds, divided into the Four Cardinal Mottos and the Three Essential Attitudes. The Four Cardinal Mottos are: quieting the mind, quieting the body, respect for Heaven, and cultivation (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2014, 17–8). The Three Essential Attitudes include sincerity, respectfulness, and faithfulness.

The first and second Cardinal Mottos are “quieting the mind” (*anshim*) and “quieting the body” (*anshin*). The body manifests the mind and can only be given quiet by controlling the latter, abandoning self-deception and futile desires, and keeping the mind calm. Through this, one’s manners will come in accordance with propriety and reason. This aim can only be achieved by “revering Heaven” (*gyeongcheon*), which for the movement means “respecting the God of the Ninth Heaven” and being aware of Sangje’s constant presence. This awareness is obtained through “cultivation” (*sudo*).

The cultivation includes *gongbu* (a specifically timed devotional incantation ritual held at the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex, which is believed to hasten the opening up of the coming earthly paradise), spiritual training, and prayer. *Gongbu* is divided into *sihak* and *sibeop*, which are different ways to chant incantations in specifically designated places and in certain ways. Spiritual practice refers to chanting the Tae-eul mantra without a designated place or time. The prayer is divided into daily prayer and weekly prayers. The daily prayer is performed at 1 a.m., 7 a.m., 1 p.m., and 7 p.m. The weekly prayers, or prayers for the fifth day of every traditional Korean week (which consists of five days), are practiced in a designated place or at home, at 11 p.m., 5 a.m., 11 a.m. and 5 p.m.

More elaborate and collective devotional offerings (*Chiseong*) are held on the dates of birth and death of Kang Jeungsan, Jo Jeongsan, and Park Wudang, and of major religious events in the history of the movement, as well as on dates related to seasonal divisions, especially the Winter solstice, the Summer solstice, and the beginnings of Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

### Visual Arts

Beauty will be a key feature of the future earthly paradise, but beauty is also a tool to pursue *Dotong jin'gyeong* and to live the key principle of *Haewon sangsaeng*. Daesoon Jinrihoe has built temples that are not only functional for its rituals and gatherings but also express this divine beauty as an anticipation of the earthly paradise. At the same time, architectural elements, paintings, and sculptures in the movement's temples help members to practice *Haewon sangsaeng* and serve the didactic purpose of teaching Daesoon Jinrihoe's intricate cosmology.

Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that, in pursuing the human quest for divine beauty, a special role is played by *Dancheong*. In Korean tradition, *Dancheong* is the art of harmonizing the twelve colors and is used to decorate important buildings, thus conveying an image of dignity and authority. *Dancheong* also serves the practical purpose of protecting surfaces against weathering, but it is much more than that. Harmonizing colors creates the image of an ideal world, where everything is in harmony. For Daesoon Jinrihoe, *Dancheong* is an expression of religious faith and devotion to the Supreme God. Practicing *Dancheong* is a form of *Haewon sangsaeng*, which creates sacred and majestic spaces, where devotees can experience a taste of the future earthly paradise.

Although a few members of Daesoon Jinrihoe do have formal artistic training, the movement believes that the art of *Dancheong* and the basic principles of traditional Korean painting and sculpture can also be learned by those who did not attend art school. The sacred spaces created by Daesoon Jinrihoe are the result of a collective effort wherein many devotees cooperated with one another. Paintings and sculptures are not signed, and the name of the artists is not considered important. The collective exercise of *Haewon sangsaeng* through the creation of beauty is regarded as much more significant than the promotion of any one given devotee as an "artist."

This does not mean, however, that Daesoon Jinrihoe did not create its own distinctive style in the visual arts. Although firmly rooted in Korean tradition, it also displays a certain otherworldly character, whose aim is to remind those who look at the buildings, the sculptures, and the paintings that Daesoon Jinrihoe announces the future earthly paradise. While the concept of "symbolism" is now disputed in the West, the movement's works of art can be defined as "symbolist"

in the sense that their symbolic significance is more important than their literal meaning.

In part, the other temples of Daesoon Jinrihoe replicate the features of Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex, and I would focus on some key artistic elements that are part of this temple. It should be noted, however, that Geumgangsán Toseong Training Temple Complex includes a unique feature, the already mentioned giant statue of Maitreya Buddha completed in 1997. The stone statue stands sixty-four feet high. It wears a *gat* (a Korean traditional hat) and includes 105 pieces of golden beads in the area between his face and neck.

Again, the statue is reminiscent of traditional Korean iconography of Maitreya Buddha, the coming future Buddha, but it also exhibits unique features that are meant to underline the special association of Maitreya Buddha with Kang Jeungsán. Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that the God of the Ninth Heaven, the Supreme God, descended to Earth in the early nineteenth century at the Cheongye Tower (天啓塔), located “in the West” (although some believe the Tower to be located in the spiritual rather than in the physical world), before examining the three realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind, and coming to inhabit the statue of the Great Maitreya Buddha in the Geumsán Temple. Kang Jeungsán also identified himself with Maitreya. The style and iconography of Geumsán Temple, one of Korea’s national treasures, influenced the art of Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Visitors to the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex enter through the Sungdo Gate, whose name means “Worshipping the Truth,” into the most holy area of the Complex, called “Jeong-nae” (sanctuary inner court). The Sungdo Gate conveys an impression of majesty, and is reminiscent of the gates in the royal palaces of the kings of Korea. Upon entering, disciples stand facing the Bonjeon, the main building, and bow with their hands together. On the wall of Sungdo gate, there are mural paintings including the pictures of the four guardian deities in charge of the four directions.

The most sacred place of the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex is the Bonjeon, a four-storied building that outwardly appears to be only three stories high. On the fourth and the highest floor of the Bonjeon is the Yeongdae, where Kang Jeungsán (as Gucheon Sangje, the God of the Ninth Heaven) and other “great deities” are enshrined in fifteen “holy positions.” In the second and third floor, only Kang Jeungsán is enshrined in a holy portrait. The fourth floor enshrined the fifteen Great Deities, including Gucheon Sangje, in holy portraits

or holy tablets. The primary godships include Gucheon Sangje (Kang Jeungsan), Okhwang-sangje (the Great Jade Emperor, whom Daesoon Jinrihoe identifies with the divinized Jo Jeongsan), and Buddha Sakyamuni, who are surrounded by other deities, in twelve holy positions. These include the Myeongbusiwang (the ten otherworldly spiritual kings who judge human souls in the afterlife), the Oaksanwang (the five earthly spiritual kings in charge of the mountains in five directions of Earth), the Sahaeyongwang (the four spiritual dragon kings in charge of the seas), the Sasitowang (the four earthly spiritual kings in charge of the four seasons), Gwanseongjegun (the Chinese general Guan Yu, who died in 220 CE and was divinized in Korean folk religion as a heavenly king protecting against evil spirits or demons), Chilseongdaeje (the Big Dipper kings who are in charge of human lifespan and fortune), the Jikseonjo (paternal ancestors), the Oeseonjo (maternal ancestors), Chilseongsaja (the Big Dipper emissary, one of the helpers of the Chilseongdaeje), Ujiksaja and Jwajiksaja (the other two emissaries who aid the Chilseongdaeje), and Myeongbusaja (the psychopomp who guides the newly arrived souls in the afterlife and the emissary who assist the Myeongbusiwang, the ten otherworldly spiritual kings who judge human souls in the afterlife).

Outside the Bonjeon, visitors encounter the Cheonggye Pagoda, which represents the cosmological view of Daesoon Jinrihoe and whose sculptures are at the same time one of the movement's main artistic achievements. The Pagoda includes four parts: the pedestal, the lower body, the upper body, and the top. In turn, each part consists of different layers. The pedestal has three layers. The first includes a series of engraved pictures called Simudo, which reproduce the Simudo paintings (described below) and represent the cultivation process of the individual devotee. In the second layer, the Sashindo pictures portray the four symbolic animal deities who represent the four seasons and four directions. In the third layer, there are the twelve deities of the Chinese zodiac (Sibijisindo), who correspond to the twelve months and twelve directions.

The lower body of the Pagoda includes three octagonal layers, engraved with the twenty-four divinities who oversee the twenty-four seasonal subdivisions (i.e. twenty-four solar terms in the year, spaced roughly fifteen days apart). The upper body includes seven quadrangular layers, engraved with the images of the twenty-eight divinities in charge of the constellations. The top consists of nine round layers, representing the Ninth Heaven, the highest place in the universe and the

seat of Sangje, who coordinates from there the whole universe. The Cheonggye Pagoda seems to have some of its artistic antecedents in the Korean tradition, yet its project is aimed at representing the peculiar cosmology of Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Wandering around Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex, devotees and visitors encounter several cycles of paintings and single pictorial works, of which two are particularly important, the Simudo paintings and the mural painting of *Haewon sangsaeng*. Simudo means “ox seeking pictures,” and the cycle of six pictures depicts the journey of spiritual self-cultivation (Sudo) by using the metaphor of a boy finding an ox (Religious Research and Edification Department of Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017, 52–3). Great care was exerted in preparing these paintings, which are reproduced in other temples and are aimed at conveying the essential of Daesoon Jinrihoe’s spiritual journey.



**Figure 1.** The Simudo Paintings.



The first Simudo picture is called *Simsim-yuoh* (deep contemplation leading to awakening). The boy, under a pine, contemplates the greatest questions of human existence. The second picture is *Bongdeuk-singyo* (to find and follow Heavenly Teachings). The boy finds the hoof prints left by the white ox. These prints symbolize the guidance of divine beings, who introduce the seeker to the truth. But the truth has not yet been grasped, and in the third picture, *Myeoni-suji* (to keep training and overcome hardships), the boy finally starts seeing the ox. The ox soon disappears behind a rocky peak, while the young seeker should follow a bumpy road under a storm and lightning. This is the stage of the problems and difficulties each seeker of the truth should overcome. But the boy does not give up, and in the fourth picture, *Seongji-useong* (to keep devoting oneself to the Dao of Daesoon Truth), his efforts are rewarded, and we see him finding and petting the white ox under a clear sky.

The seeker has found the truth, and the truth would carry him into a higher life. This is depicted in the fifth painting, *Dotong-jingyeong* (perfected unification with the Dao of Daesoon Truth), where the boy rides the white ox, which means perfected unification with the Dao. He quietly plays a flute while the season has changed to autumn, which means “coming to fruition for the consistent exertion” (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017). The sixth painting is called *Doji-tongmyeong* (the Later World of earthly paradise). The boy has perfectly unified with the Dao of Daesoon Truth and becomes an earthly immortal. The world is transformed into a land of beauty, where heavenly maids play music, elixir plants are in full bloom, and cranes leisurely enjoy peace in a nearby meadow. This represents the earthly paradise, where Daesoon Truth is fully realized.

Another pictorial representation of the principles of Daesoon Jinrihoe is what the movement calls the *Haewon sangsaeng* painting. It depicts a woman carrying her baby on her back and walking down a country road, with a snack basket set on her head. The mother’s look towards her child is one of unconditional love, and the child can find no other place safer or more comfortable than her mother’s back, despite the weight she is carrying. There are no grievances, nor seeds for future grievances, as mother and child are in perfect harmony between each other. *Haewon sangsaeng* implies that all human relationships can be based on trust and love, just like that of the mother and child in the painting. The dignified and harmonious style of the painting evokes the Korean traditional ideals of *Injon* (human nobility), by which people can respect each other and live in genuine

harmony in the coming Later World. This is an earthly announcement of the harmony of the future paradise achieved through the practice of *Haewon sangsaeng*.

The Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex also includes the so called Sacred Paintings, which illustrate the life of Kang Jeungsan and Jo Jeongsan. The hall where they are displayed is normally accessible to members of the religion only. Compared to the highly symbolic Simudo paintings, their style is somewhat simpler and they serve primarily a didactic purpose.

Two images frequently encountered in the iconography of Daesoon Jinrihoe and its temples are the phoenix and the holy symbol of Dao. The phoenix is a well-known sacred bird in East Asian mythology and legends. It is a symbol of auspiciousness and peace. In Daesoon Jinrihoe, its meaning is directly connected with the announcement of the coming earthly paradise. The East Asian phoenix is usually depicted in a seated posture with its wings folded, but in Daesoon Jinrihoe's iconography the bird often has a short tail and dynamically flies on its wings, indicating the imminence of the earthly paradise.

The version of the holy symbol of Dao used by Daesoon Jinrihoe is unique to the movement. The three circles in black, gold, and red represent the three realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. The Chinese character 大 [da] is repeated four times, positioned in the four directions of East, West, North, and South. It has multiple meanings: the four 大 [da] represent the four stages of nature (Birth 生, Growth 長, Harvest 斂, and Storage 藏), as well as the four cycles of the Heavenly Dao (Origination 元, Proliferation 亨, Benefit 利, and Firmness 貞), of the Earthly Dao (Spring, Summer, Autumn, and Winter), and of Humanity's Dao (Benevolence 仁, Propriety 禮, Righteousness 義, and Wisdom 智). In this symbol, there are five colors (blue, red, yellow, white, and black), symbolizing the Five Elements and the interaction of Yin and Yang.

Significant artistic elements of the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex, replicated in some other temples, include the great bell named "Daewon Bell," which symbolizes the humanity's deep wish to live in harmony and mutual beneficence, free from conflict. This 29.7 U.S. tons (27 metric tons) bell, 91.7 inches in diameter and 13 feet high, had a trial tolling ceremony on June 24, 1993 (lunar calendar). It is placed inside a Jonggak Pavillion (i.e. a pavilion built in the shape of the Chinese character 井 [jǐng]) which represents the four seasons and the flow of all directions. On top of the roof, the nine round layers are built to

symbolize the Ninth Heaven. The bell is tolled four times on normal days and eight times on special days (i.e. once every five days). In the Geumgangsán Toseong Training Temple Complex, there is another similar Daewon Bell, located inside a Jonggak Pavillion.

Visual arts cultivated by Daesoon Jinrihoe also include cinema. In 1984, the movement released the movie, *The Road to Peace and Harmony*. Although conceived by members of the movement, the movie was directed by a well-known Korean movie director, Kang Dae-jin (1935–1987), who was not part of Daesoon Jinrihoe. This was also true for the well-known actors Jeon Un (1938–2005) and Lee Soon-jae (1935–), who starred respectively as Kang Jeungsan and Jo Jeongsan (Religious Research and Edification Department of Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017, 19). Although Kang Dae-jin had his own recognizable style as director, he adapted to the pedagogical needs of Daesoon Jinrihoe, producing a movie that is primarily didactic. Jeon Un and Lee Soon-jae produced memorable performances as Kang Jeungsan and Jo Jeongsan respectively. According to Daesoon Jinrihoe, the actors were not familiar with the movement before starring in the movie, but became close to it after having been deeply moved by the characters they interpreted.

### *Conclusion*

In recent years, some Western scholars have started noticing Daesoon Jinrihoe, particularly by participating to scholarly conferences organized at Daejin University, which include the yearly World SangSaeng Forums. On the other hand, there are Western scholars who are influenced by Korean accounts hostile to the movement. Criticism of Daesoon Jinrihoe comes mostly from other religions, other branches of believers in Kang Jeungsan, and some Korean mass media. A few Western scholars echo this criticism and discuss in a negative way the internal conflicts (see e.g. Jorgensen 2001; 2018). The situation is complicated by the fact that most documents and texts of Daesoon Jinrihoe have not been translated into English and its overseas activities are limited.

This is, precisely, the main challenge Daesoon Jinrihoe faces for its future. Not only its dimensions in Korea would make international expansion a logical development, but the movement's theology clearly presents Daesoon Jinrihoe as a new religion capable of guiding the whole world through a way of salvation and

peace. In contrast with Jeung San Do, another branch of believers in Kang Jeungsan that has already established a presence in the United States and other countries, Daesoon Jinrihoe has so far largely limited its activities to South Korea, with the exception of the two branch campuses of its Daejin University inaugurated in China and a small presence in Washington D.C. Now Daesoon Jinrihoe wishes to be engaged in global expansion, and this is a target the movement's devotees pay attention to. However, prior to attempting full scale expansion, the movement's first priority is the translation of its complicated Korean scriptures into other languages. Additionally, Daesoon Jinrihoe is aware that internal changes must occur for the sake of expansion. New religions generally go through this process, when transforming from domestic into global movements.

## **Glossary**

Anshim : 安心, quieting the mind.

Anshin : 安身, quieting the body.

Cheonji Gongsa : 天地公事, the Reordering of the Universe.

Chiseong : 致誠, elaborate and collective devotional offerings.

Daesoon Jinrihoe : 大巡眞理會, the Fellowship of Daesoon Truth.

Dotong jin'gyeong : 道通眞境, the perfected unification with Dao.

Eumyang hapdeok : 陰陽合德, the creative conjunction of Yin and Yang.

Gaebyeok : 開關, the Great Transformation.

Gongbu : 工夫, a specifically timed devotional incantation ritual held at the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex, which is believed to hasten the opening up of the coming earthly paradise.

Gucheon Sangje : 九天上帝, the God of the Ninth Heaven.

Gyeongcheon : 敬天, revering.

Haewon sangsaeng : 解冤相生, the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence.

Hucheon : 後天, the Later World.

Jeong-yeong : 典經, the canonical scripture of Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Sangangryeong : 四綱領, the Four Cardinal Mottos.

Samyoche : 三要諦, the Three Essential Attitudes.

Seoncheon : 先天, the Former World.

Sibeop : 侍法, one of the two varieties of Gongbu.

Sihak : 侍學, one of the two varieties of Gongbu.

Sinin johwa : 神人調化, the harmonious union of divine beings and human beings.

Sinjo : 信條, creeds.

Sudo : 修道, cultivation.

Tae-eul mantra : 太乙呪, the main incantation used in Daesoon Jinrihoe.

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