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Introduction: The Korean “Rush Hour of the Gods” and Daesoon Jinrihoe

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ABSTRACT: This issue of *The Journal of CESNUR* is devoted to Daesoon Jinrihoe, the largest contemporary new religion in South Korea. New religions in South Korea are among the largest and fastest-growing religious movements in the world, yet they are understudied outside of their home country. Their growth confirms that in our allegedly “secularized” world, new religions continue to be born, flourish, and expand internationally. The case of Daesoon Jinrihoe is discussed by contributors of this issue in its own merits, without relying on generalizations on Korean new religions. On the other hand, both the Korean and the larger East Asian contexts are considered in all articles.

KEYWORDS: Daesoon Jinrihoe, Religion in Korea, Korean New Religions, Secularization, New Religious Movements.

CESNUR, the Center for Studies on New Religions, was established in Italy in 1988 to offer a professional association to international scholars of new religions and to document the global religious pluralism. It has organized thirty-one international conferences throughout the world, has published more than 100 books, and operates four different large Web sites.

When CESNUR was started, new religions were not taken seriously and dismissed as mere curiosities. The prevailing orthodoxy among European scholars of religion was that religion was declining, and, in the famous words of anthropologist Anthony Wallace (1923–2015),

the evolutionary future of religion is extinction. (...) As a cultural trait, belief in supernatural powers is doomed to die out, all over the world, as a result of the increasing adequacy and diffusion of scientific knowledge and of the realization by secular faiths that supernatural belief is not necessary to the effective use of ritual. The question of whether such a

denouement will be good or bad for humanity is irrelevant to the prediction; the process is inevitable (Wallace 1966, 264–65).

As is known, for decades, especially among social theorists, the main model of interpretation has been the secularization thesis. Secularization was defined as the transformation of a society from close identification and affiliation with religious values and institutions toward nonreligious values and secular institutions. The secularization thesis refers to the belief that as societies progress, particularly through modernization and rationalization, religion loses its authority in all aspects of social life and governance.

Later in his life, one of the main advocates of these theories, Peter Berger (1929–2017), started suspecting that his notion of secularization was not universally true. He noticed that, in the U.S., religious pluralism and technological progress coexisted with a presence of institutional religion significantly higher than in Europe. Initially, Berger considered the possibility of an “American exceptionalism” in religion. Later still, however, the same Berger and others realized that rapidly modernizing countries such as South Korea, Turkey, or Taiwan behaved very much like the United States, and religion was actually growing there. They concluded that perhaps the classic secularization theory, implying that modernity caused the decline of religion, was true only in Western Europe, which had its peculiar “European exceptionalism” (Berger, Davie and Fokas 2008).

But even in secular Europe, there are areas where religion grows, so that sociologists of religion retreated to the humbler theories of “multiple modernities” (each local situation is different from the others), “multiple secularizations,” and more (Calhoun, Juergensmeyer and VanAntwerpen 2011; Rosati and Stoeckl 2012).

That global new religions appear today runs counter the traditional theory, elaborated by the German-Swiss psychiatrist and philosopher Karl Jaspers (1883–1969), who had a strong influence on modern theology and philosophy, of a unique and unrepeatable “Axial Age,” from about the 8th to the 3rd century BC, when in both East and West all the great religions appeared (Jaspers 1949). We can wonder whether perhaps today we are in a second “Axial Age.”

This question may seem exaggerated to those who look only to Europe or North America, where no major new religions have emerged in the late 20th or early 21st century, and the most studied new religions established in the mid-20th

century do not seem to be growing. However, this is an ethnocentric view. In Latin America, Africa, and Asia the growth of the new religions is continuous.

Between World War I and II, Korean new religions had more members than traditional religions. Today, they still count their numbers in the millions. Although Taiwan and Japan, for which the expression “rush hour of the Gods” was originally introduced by Horace Neill McFarland (1923–2017: McFarland 1967), come closer, in no other country in the world have new religions been so successful. How was this possible?

This issue of *The Journal of CESNUR* traces the roots of contemporary new religions in Joseon Korea’s 19th-century social and religious crisis, and show how the oldest Korean new religion, Donghak, was at the roots of all the subsequent religious effervescence. This process cannot be understood without examining a larger context, where Korean national identity became contested, national symbols lost their religious significance, and a quest for new shared meanings accompanied economic and social transformations, as illustrated in the article by Kang Donku. Yoon Yongbok starts from Donghak to present a map of Korean new religions and emphasize the special features of the largest of them, Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Well-known in Korea, Daesoon Jinrihoe is understudied abroad—and occasionally misunderstood, as evidenced in the article by Yoon Yongbok and Massimo Introvigne criticizing a recent text by John Jorgensen on this new religion. The same Introvigne provides a general introduction to Daesoon Jinrihoe. Park Sangkyu observes that the few existing studies on Daesoon Jinrihoe focus on its theology, while he discusses its organizational structure, based on the replication at all levels of the master-disciple relationship. Cha Seon-Keun examines the doctrine of suffering of Daesoon Jinrihoe, and how its explanation of human affliction differs from those proposed by traditional East Asian religions.

On the one hand, the articles confirm that Daesoon Jinrihoe should be studied within the Korean context and the political events that resulted from the propagation of Donghak, the execution of its leader in 1864, and a revolution carried out in the name of the movement in 1894. The failure of the bloody Donghak revolution of 1894, however, changed forever the attitude of Korean new religions, and most switched from political activism to social welfare and charity. Through the Korean War and beyond, new religions gained credibility

both as providers of social and educational services and as alternatives to traditional religions and mainline Christianity. This is certainly true for Daesoon Jinrihoe, as documented in the article by Rosita Šorytė, who also notes how the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex spatializes a vast social welfare activity by offering to it a visible center that is both organizational and spiritual.

As Cha notices, Daesoon Jinrihoe’s theology, practices, and rapid growth are somewhat unique in the Korean and perhaps international scenario of new religious movements. Yet Daesoon Jinrihoe, precisely in this moment when it tries to evolve into a global movement, can only be profitably studied by showing its relationship with the larger contexts of East Asian religions and “Korean new religions,” although Yoon and Introvigne caution against hasty and inaccurate generalizations about the latter category.

It is not an exaggeration to say that adequate scholarly studies of Daesoon Jinrihoe were eagerly awaited by those studying new religious movements throughout the world. There was simply not enough information on such a large movement. Much work remains to be done, but we hope that this issue of *The Journal of CESNUR* would be at least a starting point to fill the gap.

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Cultural Identity and New Religions in Korea

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ABSTRACT: The fact that in modern Korea several religions co-exist, and none of them is hegemonic or dominant, has created problems for the country's cultural identity. The three main symbols of this identity are ambiguous. The national flag includes symbols derived from the Confucian interpretation of the Chinese *I Ching*. The national anthem, composed by Protestants, has a reference to the Christian God. Dangun, the mythical progenitor of the Korean people, is interpreted alternatively as a historical character or a god. These symbols do not talk to each other, and their very status as national symbols is being eroded. New religions are successful in Korea, because they address the problem of national identity and offer new solutions to it that many Koreans find persuasive.

KEYWORDS: Religion in Korea, Korean Cultural Identity, Korean New Religions, Dangun, *Taegeukki*, *Aegukga*.

The Status Quo of Korean Religions

The number of people who identify themselves as religious comprises about half of the entire population of Korea. Those who claim not to be interested in any religion are about 30%. This percentage may include those who are satisfied with their own lives, or try to have a better life through something similar to religion, although they prefer to call it with another name. The number of Buddhists in Korea is about 21% of the population, with 7% of Catholics and 20% of Protestants (called “Christians” in Korea, a designation that does not include Catholics). The number of Protestants now appears as more likely to decline or stagnate, while that of Catholics tends to increase (Goh 2012, 15–25).

The current condition of Korean religions can be summarized in four propositions. First, there is no leading religion in Korea. It would not be an

exaggeration to say that Korea is a religious museum, where almost all religions, including Buddhism, Catholicism, Protestantism, and new religions are actively propagated. In addition, Korea may well be the only country in the world where Western and Eastern religions co-exist with similar numbers of followers. Most countries in the world, including China, Japan, West Asia, and the nations in Europe and the Americas, are likely to have one or more leading religions. There is no other place like Korea, in which Eastern religions based on Buddhism and Western religions based on Christianity have almost equal power and interact actively with each other. Accordingly, Korea has been described as a unique country, where no religion takes the lead in social, political, and cultural matters (Kang 2011, 30–5).

Religions and Cultural Identity

The cultural identity of each country is usually created and maintained by a leading religion. For example, some countries whose leading religion is Christianity have a national flag with a cross, while an Islamic country would have a crescent on its flag. And, regardless of what the leading religion is, it is natural that the national flag of a socialist country would have socialist symbols. In Korea, however, as an environment where different religions coexist, it is somewhat difficult to establish or maintain a cultural identity. The Korean flag alludes to Confucianism. Yet, Korea cannot establish or maintain any longer a cultural identity based on its Confucian past (Kang et al. 2016, 213–39).

Second, there is a tendency among Koreans towards indifference about religion in general. The current Constitution of Korea expressly embodies the principle of separation of religion and politics, which implies that national or public schools cannot teach a specific religion. Although students may learn about religion in general while studying history, such knowledge is very unsystematic as well as superficial. In addition, the media tends to emphasize negative aspects of religion, only to distort its image. Additionally, many largely and erroneously perceive other religions based on their own. In this context, most Koreans are ignorant of religion in general, and those who claim a religious knowledge usually mean they know their own religion.

In other words, Korean believers are generally ignorant of religions other than their own. For instance, only a few Buddhists have read the Bible. The difference

between the Old and the New Testament, or Judaism and Christianity, may be very unfamiliar to Korean Buddhists. This gap among religions is not specific of Buddhists, and is found among devotees of all faiths. Sometimes, we are criticized for not knowing literature, arts or economy, however, we are rarely blamed for not knowing religion. There is even a perception that those who are most ignorant about religion constitute the most intellectual part of the population.

Due to both the co-existence of many religions and ignorance of religion, Korea is more likely than other countries to be entangled in conflicts among religions. Religious feuds are worse than conflicts caused by regionalism, schools, personal relations, or kinship. To establish a truly human society, one must cherish oneself and the others. In addition, one should not be self-absorbed, and realize that others have something to cherish as well. In Korea, the wedding ceremonies or funerals held in religious facilities are usually attended only by devotees of that specific religion. Many Koreans tend to be indifferent to what others regard as very important.

Third, while the separation of politics and religion is clearly affirmed in the Constitution of Korea, the government has implemented a religious policy that focuses on Buddhism, Catholicism, and Protestantism. From the epoch of the Three Kingdoms (57 BCE to 668 EC) to the era of the Goryeo dynasty (918–1392), Buddhism had been the official religion of Korea. In the era of the Joseon dynasty (1392–1897) the official religion was Confucianism. Japanese Shintoism, Buddhism, and Christianity became in turn official religions during the colonial period. At that time, these three religious groups were controlled by the Department in charge of religions, but other groups were designated as pseudo-religions and dealt with by the Department of Security Maintenance.

After the independence of Korea (1945), the U.S. military government implemented a Christianity-friendly policy. The number of Christians reached about 2% in those days. Christmas became an official holiday. Korea offered Buddhist worship services in the army during the Vietnam War in 1967, which enabled the propagation of Buddhism among the military. Buddha's birthday was first publicly celebrated in 1975. But the truth is that there are more than three religions in the Korean religious landscape. Other religions tend to be more neglected politically than the three main ones.

Fourth, politics and religions have a closer relationship in Korea than foreigners may believe. Religions need politics to receive national subsidies,

while politics need religions to take advantage of their tacit support in the elections. The Constitution prohibits any direct connection between politics and religions, but they maintain a good and sometimes close relationship.

The government does not seem to follow a single strategy in terms of support for religious groups. A circle of religions tries to maintain a good relationship with the government and to receive funds. The government controls religious groups through the allocation of subsidies. Some religious groups deliberately and actively hold more events to get more governmental funds, although they should first advance the corresponding expenses. There is a serious risk of an unholy and utilitarian alliance of the government and religions. To a certain degree, the phenomenon would have a negative effect on the establishment of a Korean cultural identity, or at least this is my tentative conclusion (Kang 2008, 1–18).

Symbols of Cultural Identity in Korea

Some features should be examined to understand the cultural identity of Korea. First, the traditional culture has not been properly appropriated by the population. In all cultures, major rituals should be suitably transformed, to remain alive for a long time and sustain the culture itself. For instance, a wedding ceremony is an important rite for the couple, their families, and friends. In recent times, Korean wedding ceremonies have been classified into traditional, westernized, and religious. However, very few Koreans know precisely the ceremonies of wedding and their meaning. And only a few understand them. It is impossible to expect any improvement in this field, with a minority only knowing the wedding ceremonies and the significance of wedding. What should be a precious wedding ceremony degrades into a series of meaningless activities.

The structure of a common wedding hall in Korea is somewhat similar to that of a Christian church. Christian churches endow the ceremony of each wedding with symbolic significance. But common wedding halls lack the symbolic meanings of the Christian ceremonies, since there is a cross and a “clergy,” but they are out of their Christian context. Except for the rituals held in religious facilities, the Koreans just casually participate in wedding ceremonies.

Second, due to the lack of consistency in culture, cultural vitality also lacks.

How a culture negotiates the recreational factors in an appropriate manner is also important. Koreans are said to enjoy drinking, singing, and dancing from old times, even though those were perceived as typical of a decadent culture.

The farmers' dances involved both those who danced and a non-dancing audience. There were many groups of farmers dancing in traditional villages until the 1960s. Among the villagers, there were some who played the gong, the drum, or the pipe. They promoted a festive atmosphere in the village. When the music was played, all the villagers enjoyed themselves and danced to the music.

However, folk dances such as the farmers' dances just give us aesthetic experiences. Some religions can easily denounce such amusements as decadent. In a situation where many religions coexist, all amusements would be denounced as decadent by at least one religion. Amusements will slowly disappear, reducing the vitality of the culture.

Third, the major symbols of the nation lost their functions. The coexistence of religions is a root cause making it difficult to establish and maintain cultural identity. The major symbols related to Korean cultural identity did not create close relationships. In establishing the identity of a certain religion, there is a core symbol that usually plays a crucial role, until meaning is lost, and it becomes a broken sign. Only a living symbol can endow the members of a certain group with certain meanings. We all agree that a cross, or a swastika, is a special symbol for the members of certain religions.

From the modern age, the major symbols related to Korean cultural identity could vary according to the perspectives. I would like to suggest that the key symbols are the *Taegeukki* (the Korean national flag), the *Aegukga* (the national anthem), and Dangun (the legendary founding father of Korea). But there is a problem with each one of them.

The Korean national flag, the *Taegeukki*, was derived from the *I Ching*. Thus, there is controversy whether it is authentically Korean or not, as the *I Ching* is a Chinese book. On the other hand, it is a comprehensive symbol, in which a spatial-temporal perspective, i.e. a view of the history and the cosmos, is included at the same time. The symbol of *Taeggeuk* (Great Ultimate) and eight trigrams are often seen at Daoist temples in China. The traditional explanation of the four trigrams in the Korean national flag is based on the *I Ching* as interpreted by Confucianism, which means that the present flag is definitely a symbol that

embraces the Confucian perspective regarding history and the cosmos.

The national anthem pairs up with the national flag, because it is usually sung when the flag is raised. The lyrics and melody have been used as the national anthem since the establishment of the modern Korean state in 1948. The composers are said to have been Protestants. In examining the first verse of the lyrics, “God protects and preserves our country... until the East Sea’s waters run dry and Mount Baekdu is worn away,” let’s pay attention to the word “God.” Within the Korean religious landscape, Catholicism and Protestantism are the religions centered on the notion of a personal God. The lyrics of the national anthem were written by a Protestant, however, the God in the national anthem refers to a Lord of Heaven without mentioning the Bible, which makes the reference somewhat closer to Catholicism.

Our founding ancestor, Dangun, who is celebrated on National Foundation Day, deserves our attention as well. The faith in Dangun has been historically divided into two forms. First, there is an early part of the Dangun myth, which worships him as the founder ancestor of Korea. Second, a latter part of the myth worships Dangun as a mountain god who presides over droughts and epidemics. There are also new religions and forms of shamanism where the role of Dangun is central. If all Korean cultures and religions revere Dangun, they do it in different ways.

Contemporary Problems with the Symbols of Korean Identity

In modern times, although each of the main symbols regarding our cultural identity had some limitations, if they had close relationships and complemented each other, there would be no serious issues. However, our symbols are not in a complementary but in a mutual relationship, and sometimes they contradict each other (Kang 1992, 10–20).

The *Taegeukki*, the Korean flag based on the *I Ching*, has no room for any divine entity to perform a role. That is because the cosmology and the view of history in the *I Ching* developed according to their own logic, with no room for the intervention of a divine being. What has the Lord of Heaven in the national anthem got to do with the national flag? Let’s imagine a group of Koreans raising the flag solemnly, and worshipping the Lord of Heaven by singing the national

anthem. Did the Lord of Heaven create *Taegeuk*, the Great Ultimate depicted in the flag, or did *Taegeuk* create the Lord of Heaven? The positions of *Taegeuk* and the Lord of Heaven do not have any historical or cultural relation. And neither the *Taegeukgi* (the national flag) nor the *Aegukga* (the national anthem) are related to the Dangun myth, either. There are no ancient documents identifying Dangun with the Lord of Heaven, and we cannot say that the Lord of Heaven mentioned in the national anthem is Dangun.

If the main symbols of Korean culture have such problems, perhaps we can conclude that these symbols as such do not exist at all. But, if the main symbols are unable to perform a key role, the establishment of a Korean cultural identity is impossible. And the background of this situation derives from the unique religious landscape of Korea, namely, the coexistence of religions.

From the previous analysis, the most likely conclusion is that Korea has lost its identity. This loss of cultural identity has been deeply influenced by the present condition of the religious field. Once formed, there is no guarantee that cultural identity will remain stable: it should be constantly reformulated or re-established. The loss of cultural identity in Korea leads to the question of religion. If this loss results from the present condition of the Korean religious field, then the religious groups should assume their responsibilities in the process of reformulating a cultural identity.

New Religions and Cultural Identity in Korea

The new religions of Korea do have a role in re-establishing the country's cultural identity. The questions of who we are, what we should do and what is right or wrong boil down to both cultural identity and religion. We can ask the question how a religion that proclaims universality tries to serve the interests of a certain nation. A parallel question is whether the Supreme Deity Korean religions mention is a god for the Koreans only. There is no reason why universality-oriented religions should neglect the interests of a certain nation. And the Supreme Deity is both the god for all humankind and the god of Koreans. These answers, of course, would also be true for other countries.

Korean religions pursue the goal of reaching out to all humankind based on their synthesis of different faiths, and negotiate their positions as answers to the

coexistence of several religions in Korea and the problem of the establishment of a cultural identity.

As a religious studies scholar who believes that religions are at the core of culture, and driving forces in producing culture, I would like to conclude by paying some attention to the main Korean new religions in connection with my research about cultural identity.

First, among new religions there is a tendency to restore the Korean tradition. This phenomenon can be compared to modern movements in Hinduism and Judaism, the restoration of holy sites in Buddhism, and similar revivalist trends in other religions. In Korea, this aspect can be easily witnessed in almost all the fields of religion, including architecture, costume, ritual, organization, and doctrine.

Second, in Korea some new religions tend to reinterpret or redefine history, focusing on ancient Korean past. Within the framework of the ancient history of Eastern Asia, Korean history is dominated by conflict with the neighboring countries such as China and Japan. For several reasons, however, there are only few documents in Korea of the ancient history of the country, compared to China and Japan. Professional historians prefer to study historical matters only if they have tangible materials to work on and present in a detached way. However, ordinary Koreans try to systematically understand their rich ancient history, and have confidence in traditional accounts even when documents are lacking. In this context, some of the new religions in Korea are very active by systemizing or redefining the ancient Korean history on their own (Kang 2018, 131–61).

Third, some movements claim to promote “national studies,” or try to define the notion of “national studies” in their own systematic way. The East Asian concept of national studies finds no parallels in the West. In East Asia, Confucianism is often identified with the national studies and the same role is played by Shintoism in Japan. In Korea, none of the traditional religions—Buddhism, Confucianism, Protestantism, and Catholicism—was able to take a leading place and define the national studies. Some of the new religions try to introduce themselves as promoting the national studies Korea needs (Kang 2013, 97–127).

Four, Korean new religions claim that Korea plays a crucial role in the salvation of humankind. They teach that all humans come from a common

progenitor. Koreans are direct descendants from this progenitor, while other people come from lateral branches of his family. This supports the claims that the history of the salvation of humanity will start in Korea, and that the Korean language will be the lingua franca of the future world.

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New Religions and Daesoon Jinrihoe in Korea

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ABSTRACT: In the Joseon Dynasty era, Korea adopted Confucianism as its official religion. Confucianism, however, failed to persuade the common people, because it did not include doctrines about the afterlife and prayers to the gods for obtaining their blessings. As a result, although persecuted or discriminated, Buddhism, Daoism, and shamanism survived, and Catholicism was successfully introduced. None of these religions, however, was able to replace the grand national narrative of Confucianism. As a result, starting with Donghak in 1860, several new religions emerged. Daesoon Jinrihoe occupies a unique place among them, as the first Korean religion that proposed a systematic theology and an organization based on Daoism, which had been present in Korea since the 7th century but never managed to create a stable organized religion.

KEYWORDS: Religion in Korea, Korean New Religions, Confucianism in Korea, Daoism in Korea, Donghak, Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Korea's Religious Landscape

A wide variety of religions have historically existed in Korean society. Korean folk religions such as shamanism have appeared since the pre-Christian era. Confucianism, along with Chinese characters, came into the Korean Peninsula around the time of Jesus Christ. Buddhism was introduced in the year 372, when the ancient national system started to form. In 624, Daoism was transmitted from the Tang Dynasty of China. Therefore, Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Korean folk religions came to co-exist in Korea. However, after the Goguryeo Dynasty (37 BCE–668 CE) collapsed, Daoism prevailed among common people, was adopted for the national (official) rituals by the Goryeo Dynasty (918–1392), and established itself in the country (Yoon 2016, 306–14).

Buddhism, Daoism, Confucianism, and folk religions have remained in co-existence from the Goryeo to the late Joseon Dynasty (1392–1897). Since Confucianism was a state religious tradition in Joseon Korea, every law or norm had to fit Confucian ideology. Due to the fact that Confucianism was a state religion, Buddhism and folk religions, including shamanism, were continuously suppressed until the end of the Joseon Dynasty. As a result, Buddhist monks or shamans usually came from the lowest class of people. The status of Daoism, however, did not change. Since the mid-Joseon era, it was subject to discrimination. Eventually, the last remnants of Daoist rituals performed by the government were abolished with the Japanese invasion of Joseon Korea, and Daoism continued to exist as a folk religion only.

Meanwhile, Catholicism had been introduced to Korea via China in the late 18th century. Some Korean aristocrats interested in the Western civilization came across the Chinese translation of Western documents about Christianity and converted to Catholicism. Those men in the gentry class introduced Catholicism to Korea, yet, except by themselves, it was hardly welcome in the Confucian Korean society (Kim 2003, 99–114). As Catholicism refused to hold ancestral rituals, the Joseon government branded it as a “cult.” Catholicism was continuously persecuted throughout the end of the 18th and 19th centuries. As a result, about 10,000 Catholics were martyred.

The Main Korean New Religions

In the 19th century, Western powers, including the United States, France and Britain, and Japan, approached the coasts and asked Joseon Korea to open the ports. The disturbance caused by Catholicism, along with the pressure of external powers, intensified political confusion in the late Joseon era. In this context, a new religion called Donghak (Eastern Learning) was founded by Choe Je-u (1824–1864) in 1860 in the middle of social turmoil. After Choe’s execution in 1864, Donghak tried to reform the society through a militant peasant movement. In 1894, however, two armed forces (from Qing China and Japan) marched into Korea to support the government against the rebels, and the Donghak rebellion ended in failure (Kim 2003, 99–114).

Other new religions hoping to establish a millenarian world in the future emerged in the 20th century. Donghak changed its name into Cheondoism in

1905. Subsequently, many new religions such as Daejonggyo, Jeungsanism (Jeungsangyo), and Won Buddhism appeared in Korean society in the first half of the 20th century. However, with the exception of Daejonggyo, most new religions transformed themselves from realistic movements for Korean independence into utopian ideologies announcing a new world.

The new religions that emerged during the Japanese colonial period were classified into several lineages. The major lineages are the Donghak–Eastern Learning (Cheondoism), Jeungsanism, and Won Buddhism. Most of the new religions emerged at the same time and had influence on each other. Buddhism, Confucianism, and the folk religions of Korea became elements of each new synthesis.

Its founder, Choe Je-u, stated that Donghak was a synthesis of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. In fact, Choe also incorporated elements of Catholicism, which was somewhat paradoxical, considering that Eastern Learning was introduced as the antidote allowing Joseon Korea to resist Western Learning, i.e. Catholicism. After changing its name to Cheondoism in 1905, Donghak has remained active to the present day (Kim 2003, 147).

Daejonggyo is a new religion that deifies Dangun, the mythical progenitor of the Korean people. Unlike other new religions, Daejonggyo was strongly involved in the independence movement until the Korean liberation from Japan.

Buddhist Dharma Research Group was the first name of Won Buddhism, a new religion that claims to stand for Buddhism. Won Buddhism was founded by Park Jung-Bin (Sotaesan, 1891–1943) in 1916. The name Buddhist Dharma Research Group was changed into Won Buddhism after the independence. Even though its name proclaims its Buddhist identity, Won Buddhism is somewhat different from the traditional Buddhism of Korea (Yoon 2003, 210–14). The difference between Won Buddhism and traditional Buddhism is that the former does not include the traditional rituals worshipping the Buddha. In addition, a circle representing unity is enshrined in Won Buddhism's temples as the main object of worship, rather than statues of Buddha. The canon of scriptures is different from that of traditional Buddhism. Sotaesan is regarded as the founder of a new religion, not just as an interpreter of Buddha Shakyamuni. The theology includes several basic elements of traditional Buddhism, but also adds new doctrines.

In traditional Buddhism, the most basic doctrine perceives the present world as a world of agony, whereas Won Buddhism positively perceives it as a world of blessings. Furthermore, Won Buddhism insists that the future is bright and optimistic, and includes a doctrine of the transition from the Former to the Later World that is typical of Korean new religions (Yoon 2012, 195–99).

The religious lineages commonly referred to as Jeungsanism was founded with a basis on Chinese Daoism, which was combined with Korean Daoist thought and local folk religions (Yang 2004, 13–8). The beginning of the Jeungsan lineages derives from the religious activities of Kang Il-Sun (honorific name, Kang Jeungsan, 1871–1909). Kang attained enlightenment through religious cultivation in 1901. Since then, he propagated his teachings and performed religious activities to redeem the world for seven years. His disciples call these activities and rituals the “Reordering Works of Heaven and Heart.”

Kang proclaimed that he came down from Heaven and incarnated on Earth to save the human world from despair. Since 1901, and before Kang’s death in 1909, his followers served him as a man of divine power, and started to form a religious order around him. However, the order was divided into several factions. Both their number and their followers had a spectacular growth in the colonial period. However, except Shintoism, Christianity, and Buddhism, the Japanese colonial government oppressed Korean religions, considering all of them as “cults.” At the end of the colonial period, most of the new religions faced stagnation, and some had finally ended up being closed down (Yoon 1997, 29–72).

The Emergence of Daesoon Jinrihoe

Most of the Jeungsanist new religions that surfaced during the colonial period were founded by people who had been directly related to Kang Jeungsan. Yet, Daesoon Jinrihoe and its predecessors emerged as an exceptional phenomenon. Jo Cheol-Je (honorific name, Jo Jeongsan, 1895–1958) did not have an opportunity to meet Kang Jeungsan in person. However, he claimed to have received a revelation from him, and founded a new religious movement named Mugeukdo in 1925. Mugeukdo, along with other new religions, had to disband in 1941, because of the pressure by the Japanese colonial government. After the independence, the movement started again its religious activities, and in 1950

assumed the new name of Taegeukdo (Association of Korean Native Religions 2005, 149–53).

Before passing away in 1958, Jo designated as his successor Park Han-Gyeong (honorific name, Park Wudang, 1917–1995 according to the lunar calendar traditionally adopted by the movement, or 1918–1996 according to the solar calendar). Park led Taegeukdo until 1968. Then, due to internal problems of the organization, Park left the headquarters of Taegeukdo in Busan in 1969 and founded a new religious order, Daesoon Jinrihoe, in Seoul in 1969 (Hong 1988, 791–95).

Why Were the Korean New Religions Successful?

The background of the emerging new religions, from Donghak on, includes several elements. First, the vulnerability of Confucianism was apparent in Joseon Korea. Before the Joseon era, Confucianism functioned as a national religion, which was akin to the role of Islam in some Muslim countries today. Confucian norms and ethics also worked as social norms and morality in Joseon Korea. The state affairs were carried out based on Confucian ideology. Even the kings were no exception. Confucianism ruled over Joseon, yet, it still had a weak point in the sphere of religion proper. Confucianism did not offer a systematic doctrine of the afterlife, and discouraged praying to the gods for receiving blessing and favors, something that was deeply ingrained in Korean culture and history (Keum 1989, 26–49).

It is also true that, throughout the Joseon era, Buddhism and shamanism manages to survive in spite of severe oppression. This happened because they took charge of the activities related to the afterlife and the pursuit of blessings from the gods. The weakness of Confucianism in these fields opened the way for the success of these two religious competitors.

Confucianism's limit was that it was never close to the common population of Korea, precisely because of its radical exclusion of praying for receiving blessings and favors from the gods. Religions include a variety of factors such as prayers and blessings, announcing a future better world, and seeking the Dao. If a certain religion emphasizes only one factor, it is subjected to a limit. Because of the limits of Confucianism, shamanism and other folk religions continued to exist in Joseon.

The reason why Buddhism, despite official hostility, did not completely disappear is similar. Buddhism took into account the factors neglected by Confucianism. Most Daoist rituals carried out by the government were abolished from the mid-Joseon era. But Daoism too survived as a private belief among the common people of Korea.

Second, despite the fact that Confucianism had such vulnerability, no new religions emerged until the late Joseon era. That happened because Buddhism and folk religions supported the Joseon dynasty. But, by the late Joseon era, Buddhism had lost its influence. It had been suppressed by Confucianism and had lost many traditions. Shamanism remained a folk custom including religious forms. But it could not play a role as a proper religious order. Shamanism proposed divine blessings but lacked elaborate doctrines or adequate religious theories. In addition, Buddhist monks and shamans, who belonged to the lowest classes, were treated contemptuously by the aristocrats. Their religious role had limits.

When Catholicism was introduced in the late Joseon period, it rapidly spread in several parts of the nation, which resulted from a combination of different factors. But, as Catholicism was branded as a wicked teaching or “cult” by the government and Confucianism, it was perceived by many as a social disturbance. As a consequence, Catholicism could not be recognized widely but was only partially accepted by Korean society. Because Catholicism denied the Korean custom of ancestral rituals, it was also perceived as being against the Confucian social ethic of the “three fundamental principles” and “five moral disciplines” in human relations (Jo 1988, 175–77).

If we look at the social atmosphere in general, Catholicism was regarded as a “cult” or pseudo-religion by a significant number of Koreans. This prevented Catholicism from being accepted on a nationwide basis. Due to the widespread opposition to Catholicism, a third religion, outside Buddhism or Daoism, was born. As mentioned earlier, Choe Je-u believed he was proposing a synthesis of Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, but he also incorporated Christian elements.

Third, at that time, the socio-cultural turmoil had a strong impact on the birth of new religions. A faith in which the path to a new world was opened by a new leader spread throughout Korea. This phenomenon would have been hard to anticipate in established religions such as Confucianism or Buddhism, or a

relatively new religion such as Catholicism. The birth of the third religion was timely enough to give such faith to many.

Donghak emerged in that background, but the external powers, especially Japan, invaded Korea in the first decade of the 20th century. Ordinary Koreans struggled to find spiritual comfort. In the middle of social chaos, Korean new religions started to emerge. Except Donghak, most of the Korean new religions started their activities between 1900 and the 1930s, a period of time including the Japanese invasion and the colonial era. The new religions of this period were characterized by ethnocentrism. They proposed plans for world peace, which they believed could and should be accomplished, with the Korean people at its center.

This process started with Donghak. Under complex circumstances, Choe Je-u, who came from an impoverished gentry family, suggested a new religion that combined Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. His ideas found widespread acceptance in Korean society, except in the Confucian ruling class. Early Donghak grew rapidly among the common people. In the end, however, Donghak was suppressed and its founder was executed. His execution was the root cause of the Donghak peasant revolution, which bravely resisted against the government and foreign powers. Ultimately, however, the revolution was subjugated, and one of its consequences was the permanence of a Japanese army in Korea.

Since Donghak exerted a strong religious influence on Korean society, various new religions emerged in the aftermath of the failed revolution. The background against which these new religious movements emerged was a situation where the established religions showed their limitations in approaching the common people. The new religions were accepted by the commoners because they suggested new ideologies and ideals that the existed religions could not provide, and which resonated with the aspirations of ordinary Koreans.

New religions such as Donghak and Daejonggyo can be compared to Judaism because of their ethnocentrism. However, there are also differences between Korean new religions and Judaism. For the former, the Koreans are part of a “chosen people” if they are able to become leaders in the pursuit of world peace. Korean new religions insist that the world peace and a great future utopia should be the ultimate objectives, where Koreans should play a crucial role. However, the idea that Koreans should dominate and rule other peoples or nations is not present. Thus, the expression “ethnic religions” is often used rather than “ethnocentrism.”

Daesoon Jinrihoe is among the ethnic religions that originated from Kang Jeungsan, but is characterized by its uniqueness. The movement systemized intrinsic folk beliefs, myths, and legends into a new doctrine, and formed a well-organized religious order. Even though other ethnic religions took a similar stance, Daesoon Jinrihoe can be described as the group that emphasizes more strongly the importance of globalization without an ethnocentric propensity. The movement deserves attention, since it is the first in Korea that has accepted a majority of the elements of Daoist thought and has formed a religious order based on it.

In Korea, Daoism was never able in the past to grow into an organized religious order. Daoism was introduced in Korea in the early 7th century, however, it did not manage to become an organized religion and only played minor roles in personal piety and some state-run public rituals. In the late Joseon Dynasty, Daoism just disappeared amid the prosperity of Confucianism, leaving relics as popular customs. Its activities hardly attracted any attention. Daesoon Jinrihoe is unique among Korea's new religions for its systematization of Daoist elements, which lied dormant in Korean religious culture.

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Daesoon Jinrihoe: An Introduction

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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 19th 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 Jeungsan 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 Šorytė, 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 (*jinni*), 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 Yeoju Headquarters Temple Complex, and I would focus on some key artistic elements that are part of this temple. It should be noted, however, that Geumgangsan 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 Jeungsan. 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 Geumsan Temple. Kang Jeungsan also identified himself with Maitreya. The style and iconography of Geumsan Temple, one of Korea’s national treasures, influenced the art of Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Visitors to the Yeoju 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 Yeoju 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 Jeungsan (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 Jeungsan 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 Gongsu : 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 : 開闢, 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.

Sagangryeong : 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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Personal Lineage as the Main Organizational Principle in Daesoon Jinrihoe

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ABSTRACT: Studies of both traditional and new religions often focus mostly on doctrine. However, East Asian religions, old and new, are oriented to self-cultivation, and exhibit unique organizational features. The article argues that organization is more important than belief to define Korean new religions. The principle of master-disciple personal relationship (*yeonwon*) was the key organizational principle in Donghak and his successor Cheondoism, Won Buddhism, and the organizations that evolved into Daesoon Jinrihoe, i.e. in the three largest Korean new religions. The three religions, however, interpreted *yeonwon* differently, and discussed whether the principle derived from divine revelation or simply from the human organizational skills of their founders. Daesoon Jinrihoe reformulated *yeonwon*, while keeping its basic features, as *yeonmun*, creating a unique system of personal relationship that may well be the main cause of its phenomenal success and growth.

KEYWORDS: Daesoon Jinrihoe, *Yeonwon*, *Yeonmun*, Donghak, Cheondoism, Won Buddhism, Korean New Religions.

Introduction

Religious studies have mostly developed by researching major religions, and have assumed that the doctrinal aspects have a greater value than others in the study of religion. Ninian Smart (1927–2001) noted that most research on religions is based on the idea that doctrines are their most important feature (Smart 1998, 17–26). Academic studies of Korean new religions, such as Cheondoism, Daesoon Jinrihoe, and Won Buddhism, which emerged at the end of the 19th and in the early 20th centuries and became phenomenally successful, also prioritized their doctrinal aspects.

From the late 19th to the early 20th century, Korea, encountering the Western

powers, was colonized by Japan and went into powerful culture shocks. The three main Korean new religions emerged consecutively, and developed during a period of sixty years. They caused rapid social changes through their revolutionary doctrines, and influenced the birth of other religious movements. It is no wonder that studies of these movements have considered doctrines a priority.

However, these three religious traditions also exhibited unique organizational features. They utilized the organizational principle focusing on personal lineage that had come from the cultivation methods of Daoism, which was integrated with folk religions and functioned as a basic religion in Korea. However, this has not attracted enough attention until now. In addition, it is also neglected that the three religions transformed their organizational principle of personal lineage during their historical development, and successfully established unique organizational systems (Park 2008, 161). This study aims to support the idea that the organizational principle based on personal lineage played a crucial role in the nestling-down of new religions in Korea through their establishment and development. In particular, the principle greatly contributed to the phenomenal success of Daesoon Jinrihoe.

The life of Daesoon Jinrihoe devotees is mostly centered at a local branch called *bangmyeon* (方面). These local branches are different from the central organization, and one must go through a local branch to join Daesoon Jinrihoe. Without exception, every devotee has an affiliation to a certain local branch. For almost all devotees, most cultivation and education activities are carried out in a local branch. Therefore, a local branch is characterized as a basic structure that provides the foundation for the movement's religious activities (Park 2013a, 134–35).

All the local branches are named after a geographical place that existed either in the past or at present. However, the name of a local branch and the region in which its activities take place are not actually interrelated. This non-conformity between the local branch name and the actual place where the activities take place can create a somewhat puzzling feeling when somebody first experiences Daesoon Jinrihoe. A local branch is not organized in a district related to its name, which is different from the parish-based system prevailing in other religions (Park 2013b, 256).

The geographic criterion, on which the parish system is based, does not apply

to the model of the local branch as a basic unit in Daesoon Jinrihoe. The reason is that the religious tradition of Daesoon Jinrihoe is closely related to cultivation-oriented religious practices. A devotee joins Daesoon Jinrihoe through a ceremony which is called “Dao-entering ritual (入道式),” and officially becomes a “Dao-practitioner (修道人).” This shows that the religion defines its identity as Dao. Even though the terminology and concept of “religion” has been introduced to Korean society more than one century ago, the fact that Daesoon Jinrihoe’s identity is perceived as “Dao” more than as “religion” emphasizes that cultivation has a more crucial status than belief in this movement (Park 2013a, 134).

In belief-oriented religions what is central is to identify an authority controlling the doctrine of faith and the rituals. The organizational structure is built on the basis of clergy and holy sites. In a religion that emphasizes cultivation, the structure is based on the master-disciple relationship. In other words, religions that define their aims as worship and submission to God focus on the relationships between God and the devotees (Lee 1991, 69). A many-for-one system is built on the location of holy sites, in which the clergy connects God and humans. This naturally leads to the establishment of a parish-based systems. Yet, cultivation-oriented Korean new religions are mainly based on a one-for-one relationship, of master-disciple, or mentor-mentee. The religions’ human network is built through the expansion and repetition of this one-for-one relationship.

This is also true for Daesoon Jinrihoe’s human network, which is organized through the expansion and repetition of the one-for-one relationship called *yeonwun* (緣運, destined relationship), which is similar to the master-disciple, or mentor-mentee relationship. When the scale reaches 1,000 people, a local branch called *bangmyeon* is created (Goh 2007, 214–17).

Daesoon Jinrihoe represents the strongest personal lineage organization among the Jeungsan religions. Daesoon Jinrihoe began in 1969, but it was rooted in Mugeukdo, which was founded in 1925. It was disbanded by the Japanese colonial government in 1941, resumed its religious activities in 1948, and changed its name to Taegeukdo in 1950. Although during this historical transition, there were changes in detail, these successive religious orders find their continuity in the organizational principle of which *yeonwun* is in the center. Looking at the starting point of the concept *yeonwun* and its development process, one can easily understand the organizational principle based on personal

lineage and local branches in Daesoon Jinrihoe. However, to have a better understanding on the structure of Daesoon Jinrihoe, it is necessary to look first into the concept of *yeonwon* (淵源, the fountainhead), which commonly appears in Korean new religions such as Cheondoism, Won Buddhism, as well as in Daesoon Jinrihoe itself (Park 2013a, 136).

The Yeonwon System in Donghak

Yeonwon has been widely used in the traditions of Korean Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. Korean neo-Confucianism focuses on the tradition (or succession) of Dao (*li*). Korean Zen Buddhism emphasizes the dharma lineage transmitted from master to disciple in an unbroken line. Korean Daoism values the lineage of Dao. In these traditions, the concept of Dao or dharma lineage was always crucial (Lee 1991, 69). *Yeonwon* refers to the origin (*won*) in which the dharma (Dao or law) gushes out like a spring (*yeon*), and its meaning is akin to the notions of Dao and dharma lineage themselves.

Since Choe Suwon (Choe Je-u, 1824–1864) founded Donghak (Eastern Learning) and spread its ideas, a revolutionary change emerged in the concept of *yeonwon*. Choe expanded the concept, which had been nurtured by the cultivation-oriented traditions of Korean Confucianism, Buddhism and Daoism, to the propagation of Donghak. Jeop (接) was a cross-regional unit organized by Donghak in the early years, according to human networks of “predecessors” and “successors.” The names of places where many *Jeopwon* (members of Jeop) and *Jeopju* (leader of Jeop) lived were used to designate the units known as Jeop and Po (布), forming a well-organized network. This principle of *yeonwon* was transmitted to Cheondoism, the Korean new religion that developed from Donghak (Pyo 1995, 364).

The concept had an ancient lineage as the Daoist organizational principle of the master-disciple relationship, in which secret talismans, sutras, incantations, and rituals were passed down, but it was expanded to the propagation as a way of following a tradition within the framework of a specific religious faction. Choe’s disciples called a person who transmitted his teaching *yeonwon* and a person who received the teaching *yeonbi*. The *yeonbi* received incantations and sutras from the *yeonwon* and achieved a mystic religious state by participating in rituals. This

was consecrated as the tradition (or succession) of Dao from a devotee who conveys the teaching to one who receives it, or as a mentor-mentee and *yeonwon-yeonbi* system as a way of propagating the faith.

Again, Choe's was not a system where, based on a territorial principle, devotees were managed by the clergy of a local branch. Instead, a religious order focusing on the powerful human networks-oriented principle was established, where every devotee was both a master and a disciple. Governed by the personal principle devised by Choe, the religious community organized along the *yeonwon* system enabled most devotees to regard themselves as "clergy" without in fact being led by a professional clergy. Donghak devotees had become a community united by a spiritual blood-lineage and connected to a shared tradition of Dao. This model had a strong impact on different organizations throughout Korean society, via the Donghak Revolution of 1894 and the subsequent spread of Cheondoism (Park 2008, 162).

The Yeonwon System in the Main Korean New Religions

At the end of 19th and in the early 20th century, when Donghak and Cheondoism had great effects on Korean society, it was not surprising that Kang Jeungsan (Kang Il-Sun, 1871–1909), beginning his religious activity, accepted the *yeonwon* system developed by Choe and transformed it. In fact, Kang Jeungsan claimed to be Sangje (the Supreme God of Heaven), and to have given himself a revelation to Choe before descending to the Earth and incarnating as a human. It was Sangje who had taught Choe the essence of Donghak, but there were steps only Sangje himself, by incarnating as Kang Jeungsan, could take (Park 2008, 162). The *yeonwon* system adopted by Choe and his successors was the esoteric law of Sangje Kang Jeungsan.

The *yeonwon* system and its concepts used in Donghak were completely reformulated by Kang Jeungsan. After his death, most of his disciples, who had been directly or indirectly involved in Donghak, utilized the same system as a matter of course when they established their religious orders.

In 1917, when he returned to Korea after his exile in Manchuria, Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958), who claimed that he had succeeded to the authority of religious orthodoxy through Kang Jeungsan's revelation, started its activities, and founded

the forerunner of Daesoon Jinrihoe. He also promoted the *yeonwon* system, into which the *yeonwon* system was changed and developed. Since then, the forerunner of Daesoon Jinrihoe grew spectacularly, by using its *yeonwon* system-organization. Because Kang Jeungsan did not designate his successor, his disciples were split up in a myriad of different groups, which was also due to the *yeonwon* system. The tradition that developed through Mugeukdo, Taegeukdo and Daesoon Jinrihoe, based on the personal lineage developed by Jo Jeongsan after Kang's death, experienced only minor divisions and produced the largest Korean new religion.

In the mid-1910s, the founder of Won Buddhism, Sotaesan (Park Jung-Bin, 1891–1943), observed the activities of the main Jeungsan groups, mostly active in the North Jeolla Province after Kang's death, and started his own religious order. Sotaesan too could not avoid the influence of the *yeonwon* system, which had been passed down from Donghak to the religious orders in the Jeungsan lineage. Scholars who have studied Sotaesan's early years believe that, by substantially accommodating and modifying the doctrines and the organizational principle of the Jeungsan religious groups, he was able to establish Won Buddhism and develop it. This is not surprising, because most of the early followers of Sotaesan had previously followed the religious lineage of Kang Jeungsan (Park 2008, 163).

In short, the *yeonwon* system, rooted in the idea of sequential teaching coming from the cultivation-oriented religious tradition in Korea, was changed and expanded into an organizational principle by Donghak, settled down uniquely in Korean religious culture, and was re-interpreted and re-created by Kang Jeungsan. Daesoon Jinrihoe developed the model into the *yeonwon* system, whereas Won Buddhism adopted its own *yeonwon* system. The most successful new religious organizations in Korea all originated from one root.

As of the late 19th century, Korea was an ethical, rational Confucian country dominated by the Confucian literati class. Its contradictory social system had sparked a strong opposition from the subjugated classes, including farmers, for over 500 years. Criticizing the ideology of the ruling class, they quickly and massively responded to new religions that secretly spread esoteric knowledge and rituals to replace the dominant ideology, established family-like communities, and suggested the attainment of Dao enlightenment through mystic cultivation and the advent of an earthly paradise. The three main new religions—Donghak,

Won Buddhism, and what later became Daesoon Jinrihoe—tried to replace conventional religions, while at the same time emotionally and ideologically satisfying the religious desires of the people. In the end, they were successful and overwhelmed the established religions. Their revolutionary thought and explosive growth were also able to develop successfully notwithstanding the political oppression and the Korean modernization. This success was due to their human networking system, which in times of oppression allowed them to operate secretly.

The Evolution and Crisis of the Yeonwon System in Cheondoism

The three largest new religious movements followed a different course. Donghak and early Cheondoism restructured *yeonwon* based on geographical constraints or circumstances. In the 1920s, Cheondoism weakened the *yeonwon* system and in some instances even abolished it. This clearly shows that Donghak, particularly in its late incarnation as Cheondoism, had a skeptical view on the theory that the *yeonwon* system was a divine organizational principle. To this very day, followers of Cheondoism continue to discuss two different theories, that the *yeonwon* human network system was implemented by Choe because of divine revelation, or that it was a simple human creation. Pyo Young-sam (1925–2008), a leading “Proclaimer of the Way” (宣道師, Seondosa) in Cheondoism and respected theologian, insisted that the *yeonwon* system emerged naturally after Choe started to propagate Donghak in June 1861 (Pyo 1994, 150–52, Pyo 1999, 103; Pyo 2001, 55). On the other hand, a text by the Assembly of Cheondoism Yeonwon states,

The *yeonwon* ... [is] the Law of Mind in the lineage of the great founder (Choe Je-u) ... Our order in terms of the *yeonwon* system started from the *jeonju* system, which the great founder had implemented in his third year of propagation of virtue. Since then, the *yeonwon* has become a core feature of our history, playing a major role in the great Dao, up to today (The Assembly of Cheondoism Yeonwon 2005, 1).

The leader of Dongwon-Po, which is one of the largest factions in Cheondoism, insisted that,

The spirit of the *yeonwon* has its origin in faith, and the organization of the *yeonwon* is a precious pledge of faith. If we try to pursue faith without the spirit of *yeonwon*, we would end up with a bunch of meaningless exercises. If we believe there is something false in the system

of *yeonwon*, perhaps we should abandon the pursuit of Dao altogether... The *yeonwon* system is distinct from other religions, and is the only way to transmit Dao as well as propagate virtue (Ha 1997, 180).

Because of these discussions, elements of the parish system were adopted by Cheondoism. In other words, the *yeonwon* system and the parish system were managed in compromise. This reveals that the *yeonwon* system of Donghak and Cheondoism was alternatively regarded as divine or secular, which influenced its development.

The Yeonwon System in Won Buddhism

Since the early 1920s, Won Buddhism operated a *yeonwon* system different from the other two main Korean new religions and without a clear basis on divine revelation. The most important organization in Won Buddhism is the *Gyohwadan*. It was also the organization most clearly influenced by the *yeonwon* system. Every Won Buddhism devotee should join this basic organization. *Gyohwadan*, as the basic unit that every devotee still must belong to today, consists of ten people: a chair, a deputy chair, and eight members (Lee 1989, 423–28; Goh 2013, 188).

In this organizational structure, everybody except the chair may at the same time become the chairperson of a subordinate unit. But, since the main purpose of *Gyohwadan* was education and communication rather than propagation, the *yeonwon* system was only partially adopted. In fact, in Won Buddhism, the *yeonwon* system, which in other religions is considered of divine origin, was abolished by decree, and became irrelevant for religious authority or power. Won Buddhism tried to implement the centralized and territory-focused management of its organization, based on the clergy, by transforming the system it had originally adopted (Park 2008a, 164).

Daesoon Jinrihoe: From Yeonwon to Yeonwun

Daesoon Jinrihoe has consistently recognized the *yeonwon* system as a law emanating from Kang Jeungsan, and has adopted it as an organizational principle from its early times to the present. Daesoon Jinrihoe and its predecessor

organizations have maintained a strong belief in the *yeonwon* system for over 100 years, as a constitutive element of their propagation-oriented identity. This was, in my opinion, the main reason for their rapid growth, once the organization reached a certain scale (Park 2013a, 179).

It is, however, necessary to pay attention to the scale and change of the *yeonwon* and *yeonwun* models in the religions in the lineage of Jo Jeongsan, since they corresponded to the change of Korean society in the 1920s. As we have seen, *yeonwun* is based on *yeonwon*, but includes peculiarities typical of the Jo Jeongsan lineage. Mugeukdo, which was founded in 1925, operated the *yeonwun* system on the basis of a single chain of command, and this helped it grow into a nationwide organization in a short time. Although it was weakened by the forced dissolution during the Japanese colonial government in 1941, after Korea gained independence Mugeukdo restored and expanded its influence through powerful internal cohesiveness and orientation towards propagation. It changed its name to Taegeukdo and was reorganized through the local branches called *bangmyeon*, to keep the *yeonwun* system running smoothly. Unlike the *yeonwun* system of Mugeukdo, the *bangmyeon*-based model in Taegeukdo had a dual line of command, one specializing in propagation and the other in edification.

The two-office system of the *Pojeongwon* (in charge of propagation) and the *Hojeongwon* (in charge of education) was restructured by Jo Jeongsan in 1956. It implied that the *yeonwun* system had evolved from a single track of command into a dual track. As the scale of the organization was larger and larger, this system derived from the need to manage it efficiently and to foster highly skilled religious manpower. Nevertheless, this may also be interpreted as an attempt to promote active propagation and edification in response to the radical socio-cultural change amid the modernization of Korea.

Local branches were once again developed into a three-department system at the end of the 1970s. Park Wudang (1917–1995 according to the lunar calendar used by Daesoon Jinrihoe, or 1918–1996 according to the solar calendar) inherited a model including one office that consisted of two departments, the Department of Education and the Department of Propagation. He implemented a system including two offices and three departments in 1978. The two offices were the *Pojeongwon* and the *Jeongwon* and the three departments supervised Education, Propagation, and Proper Guidance. Park's change was to create a new

Department of Proper Guidance of the *Jeongwon*. It was a significant change.

As reflected in its name, the Department of Proper Guidance of the *Jeongwon* was established to protect the solidity of the organization and secure internal cultivation discipline, as at the end of the 1970s, the propagation activities in the *Pojeongwon* were accelerated, and the scale of the organization was rapidly increasing. In addition, the change may also be read as an attempt to solve some problems of the previous system and prevent the concentration of religious power, a goal that the *yeonwon* organization achieved through separation of powers.

Although this is just an analogy, the Departments of Propagation and of Education of the *Pojeongwon* may be compared to the executive and legislative branches of a secular government, and the Department of Proper Guidance of the *Jeongwon* to the judicial branch. The *Jeongwon* was established to overcome an exclusively growth-oriented paradigm and the problems of authoritarianism it caused, and to secure the sustainability and capability to grow in a proper way, by separating the different centers of religious power (Park 2013a, 165–68).

As mentioned earlier, the master-disciple relationship was important in cultivation-oriented religions, and made the *yeonwon* system emerge. Furthermore, Daesoon Jinrihoe has embraced a Daoist worldview, a mystical theological system, and unique cultivation methods that could be hard to accept in the cultural climate created by modernization. In this context, the tradition that masters passed down to disciples was even more important. But the master's role was very difficult to play, the skillful manpower was insufficient, and the socio-cultural environment of the times was very inadequate to train it properly (Park 2013a, 159).

The *yeonwon* system answered the problem. Since many devotees naturally played the role of masters through propagation, they had a kind of experience similar to the clergy's in other religions. Thus, the *yeonwon* system identified cultivators with the right potential to improve, and efficiently nurtured them into religious professional manpower. Such people in the *yeonwon* organization worked for the edification of the first-time members who were part of the same *yeonwon*. This system offered multiple masters to each disciple, and proved remarkably effective.

Conclusion

This study has compared the development process of the three main Korean new religions, Cheondoism, Daesoon Jinrihoe, and Won Buddhism. Cheondoism alternatively located the roots of the *yeonwon* system in sacred or secular processes. Daesoon Jinrihoe perceived it as sacred, and Won Buddhism only absorbed its systemic features as an organizational principle. To understand the success of these religions, looking at their organizational principles is crucial, and may be a new angle in the study of Korean new religions. Among the three largest new religions in Korea, Daesoon Jinrihoe has the strongest *yeonwon* system, followed by Cheondoism and Won Buddhism in this order (Park 2013a, 181).

The sect-denomination continuum, the degree of factionalism, exclusiveness, and the missionary orientation of each religious order can be tentatively arranged according to how they interpret and apply the concept of *yeonwon* (Park 2008, 165). Follow-up research is recommended on whether a functional relationship exists between these additional features of each new religion and its interpretation of *yeonwon*. I believe that at least some features are directly related with the interpretation of the *yeonwon* in each movement, and that this may be an important tool to understand Korean new religions. Japanese new religions, such as Tenrykyo and Soka Gakkai, also adopted the personal lineage system in the process of their modernization, and paying attention to their rapid expansion and system management during the same years would make for interesting comparative research. Additionally, distinguishing religious organizations according to their principles based alternatively on personal or territorial lineage systems may provide a new tool for the study of the world's religions.

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Theories of Suffering in East Asian Religions: The Case of Daesoon Jinrihoe

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ABSTRACT: All religions try to explain the origins of human suffering. East Asian religions, old and new, are no exception. Daesoon Jinrihoe is unique for its identification of “mutual overcoming” as the root cause of suffering, and “mutual beneficence” as the main tool to overcome unnecessary afflictions. The paper discusses the typology of different categories of sufferings in the theology of Daesoon Jinrihoe, and the main differences between its theology of suffering and the theories of Buddhism, Confucianism, and Taoism. It also emphasizes that, while traditional East Asian religions focus on the subjective dimension of suffering and propose remedies centered on the situation of individuals, Daesoon Jinrihoe, through its notions of “mutual overcoming” and “mutual beneficence,” regards suffering as a social problem in need of social solutions.

KEYWORDS: Suffering, Suffering and Religion, Daesoon Jinrihoe, Korean New Religions, Mutual Overcoming, Mutual Beneficence.

Introduction

Among the most discussed problems in contemporary religious studies is how the different religions help their devotees cope with the practical problems of life. Religions do more than interpreting theory and theology. They negotiate, reconcile, and put into practice theological meanings in their devotees’ everyday lives (Lee 2013, 12). The theology is thus applied to life and, within the structure of religious meanings, a practical scope emerges as crucially important. Accordingly, religions should be studied beyond the theologies that have been fixed in their scriptures (Ha 2010, 1–2).

Within the larger field of the studies of religions “in practice,” an important subfield is the study of suffering, i.e. of the process where, with the help of religion, devotees acquire a new understanding of the harshness of life and adequate spiritual tools to overcome their hardships. Suffering is a universal experience: it is hard to avoid, and endless efforts are required to cope with it. All religions have offered their diverse solutions to the problem of suffering (Sohn 1995, 107–13). They continue to do so today (Hwang 1980, 42–4; Yu 2004, 303–19). The crucial role of suffering also warns scholar against studying religion from a purely secular perspective.

The religious traditions of East Asia have suggested their own solutions to the problem of suffering. However, each religion of East Asia, old or new, has adopted its own approach, which makes their plurality worth studying. This paper focuses on Daesoon Jinrihoe, one of the largest East Asian new religions, and discusses its approach to the question of suffering within the East Asian religious context.

The Causes of Suffering in the Theology of Daesoon Jinrihoe

According to Daesoon Jinrihoe, at one stage in the history of the world, the divine beings who rule each part of the universe became unable to control it. The universe was about to be annihilated. Thus, the divine beings petitioned Sangje, the Lord of the Ninth Heaven and the highest God in Daesoon Jinrihoe’s pantheon, to intervene. Sangje started an “itineration” through the Three Realms of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Progress of the Order* 1:9 and *Prophetic Elucidations* 1: the *Jeong-yeong* is the major scripture of Daesoon Jinrihoe). Sangje’s Great Itineration is regarded as the starting point of Daesoon Jinrihoe. Two key words in this narrative are “annihilation” and “petition,” and both are related to suffering.

It would not be wrong to classify Daesoon Jinrihoe among the religions that find their starting point in the problem of suffering. There is, however, a peculiarity. The range of sufferings goes far beyond the afflictions of the humans and expands to the whole universe. When asked to indicate a theology whose starting point is the problem of suffering, many would mention Buddhism. It is a matter of common knowledge that Buddha tried to resolve the basic human forms of suffering, including birth, aging, sickness, and death (the four phases of life),

by performing appropriate penance. This is, in fact, the starting point of Buddhism.

While Buddhism is prone to focusing on individual sufferings, Daesoon Jinrihoe includes the social (national) dimensions, beyond individual life. In addition, the divine beings of the universe are also considered in Daesoon Jinrihoe. They suffer too, and so does the Supreme God himself. This cosmic suffering is the context of human suffering, which is the focus of the present article.

The worldview of Daesoon Jinrihoe insists that the relationships among all created beings proceed according to the two principles of “mutual beneficence” and “mutual overcoming.” The former indicates a relationship of mutual life-giving and help, while the latter refers to mutual suppression and restraint. When these relationships are well-balanced, harmony reigns. Their imbalance, however, creates multiple problems. Daesoon Jinrihoe argues that, so far, the created world has been dominated by mutual overcoming, which resulted in the accumulation of grievances and caused many sufferings. From a remote past and until now, the principle of mutual overcoming has ruled the world. Our present world, with all its problems accumulated so far, is called the Former World. Happily, Daesoon Jinrihoe announces that the world in which conflicts will disappear, and only the principle of mutual beneficence will rule, will be opened before long. It is called the Later World, in which grievances and sufferings will disappear, and is the direct opposite of the Former World (Jang 1989, 278; Cha 2011b, 97–9).

As this scheme shows, the cause of sufferings in Daesoon Jinrihoe is mutual overcoming. This statement, however, does not express completely Daesoon Jinrihoe’s theory of suffering. The complexity of suffering cannot be explained by a single cause, and more elaborate frames are needed. In fact, the *Jeong-yeong*, the supreme scripture of Daesoon Jinrihoe, explains human suffering by insisting on mutual overcoming but it also introduces other elements. I would propose to classify them in four classes and nine models.

The MOC Model

MOC stands here for “Mutual Overcoming of the Cosmos.” It refers to causes of sufferings created by mutual overcoming in its cosmic dimension. Daesoon Jinrihoe explains that, in the background of all afflictions, there is always some form of mutual overcoming. Thus, MOC appears as the ultimate cause of all sufferings in the worldview of Daesoon Jinrihoe. But human beings are not always responsible of MOC. Many cases of MOC that are outside the sphere of human responsibility are depicted in the *Jeong-yeong*. They include wicked spirits harming human beings without any reason, the impure energies of nature, natural disasters, or the natural death of a person with the resulting grief of her bereaved family (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Authority and Foreknowledge* 1:8 and 2:18; *Saving Lives* 40).

In this model of suffering, the MOC is so powerful that it is almost impossible for human beings to avoid or prevent it. Humans do not receive any rewards through this experience of suffering, as they are not responsible for it. This kind of suffering gives humans serious resentment and creates grievances towards Heaven and the world. Daesoon Jinrihoe states that the root cause of this situation is the “Old Heaven,” which killed human beings (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Reordering Works* 1:11). To end these painful circumstances, Sangje himself descended to Earth. He reordered the cosmic program in a way of mutual beneficence by transforming the Three Realms (Heaven, Earth, and Humankind). According to Daesoon Jinrihoe, mutual overcoming will not exist in the Later World (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Progress of the Order* 1:66). This view suggests that sufferings caused by MOC should gradually disappear as we advance towards the Later World. However, humans themselves should contribute to this process by participating in Sangje’s Reordering of the Universe (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Prophetic Elucidations* 17).

The VMOH, VMOO, and VUD Models

On the other hand, there are cases in which humans are responsible of the mutual overcoming. In these cases, offenders and victims are indeed present. It is thus necessary to define a second model of suffering, which considers the victims. This model is in turn classified into three categories.

The first category is VMOH, “Victims of Mutual Overcoming Caused by Humans.” It refers to the damages caused by mutual overcoming created by human groups such as nations or societies. VMOH includes sufferings from wars, disasters, struggles among human groups, and discrimination or polarization caused by distorted structures and customs in politics, economy, or society. Typical cases would be the Nanking Massacre of 1937–38, the Holocaust, the genocide in Rwanda, ethnic cleansings, and so on. The *Jeong-yeong* provides a representative case of this kind of sufferings during the Donghak Peasant Revolution of 1894 in Korea (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Acts* 1:26; *Reordering Works* 2:19).

The second category is VMOO, “Victims of Mutual Overcoming Caused by Others.” It refers to intentional hostile acts by single individuals or unorganized small groups of individuals. The scheme is the same of VMOH, except that in the VMOO the offenders are not organized as a group. Among the examples mentioned in the *Jeong-yeong* are the incident of a servant wrongly killed by a king and the murder of Buddhist monk Jin-Muk (1562–1633) (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Acts* 1:1 and 4:28; *Reordering Works* 3:15).

The third category is VUD, “Victims of Unintended Deeds.” In this case, mutual overcoming is produced in an unintentional way. Others suffer, but clarifying the responsibility asks for an analysis whether the deed was intentional or not. The death of Emperor Shun (ca. 2294–2184 BCE according to tradition) and the sufferings of his two empresses are mentioned in the *Jeong-yeong* (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Reordering Works* 3:4) and are a good example of the VUD sub-model at work.

These different V-derivative models appear through human history. The sufferings depicted in these models do not create any positive values for human beings. Humans struggle to get rid of them. Yet, the only way to eliminate the V categories of suffering is to scrupulously avoid any kind of mutual overcoming, regardless of its origins and intentions. From the point of view of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the earthly paradise of the Later World is a place completely purified of all traces of mutual overcoming. The sufferings of the V lineage, just like these of the MOC model, can be removed only by participating in Sangje’s Reordering Works of the Universe and opening of the Later World, where only mutual beneficence will reign.

The PPT and PUW Models

The *Jeong-yeong* also presents cases of sufferings caused by the victim's own actions. Generally, these forms of suffering can be regarded as punishments for different categories of wrongdoings. We can thus introduce a P lineage model. The principle of mutual overcoming remains the basis of suffering. However, the mutual overcoming in this case is created by the victim herself, rather than by others, which is a very relevant difference with respect to the other models.

The P lineage models can be in turn classified into two categories. In the first one, PPT stands for "Punishment of the Perpetrator or Transgressor." This means that the punishment for certain wrongdoings, or a price to pay, becomes the cause of suffering. The second category is PUW, "Punishment of the Perpetrator or Transgressor for Unintended Wrongdoing." Here, a human deed becomes a sin unintentionally, but still creates grievances in others and is punished with suffering. The *Jeong-yeong* offers example of both PPT (a drunken man entrapped in a stone mortar) and PUW (a man's unwise behavior derived from his worries about his debts) (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Acts* 1:17–18 and 3:36; *Reordering Works* 1:16; *Saving Lives* 24).

From a humanistic point of view, it may appear reasonable that suffering should be endured as a punishment for personal sins (Cha 2011a, 163–64). The *Jeong-yeong* suggests a representative case where a man suffering from injuries on his chest bone overcomes the pain by repenting of his sins (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Dharma* 3:12). Models of suffering that are possibly explained by PPT and PUW become valuable when human life is well-balanced between merits and demerits, and between good and evil.

The Desire Models

Desire and humans are not separated. Desire is a basic instinct. Most religious movements of East Asia assume a position that advocates a taboo on desire, because they perceive desire as the cause of all sufferings and a source of trouble. On the contrary, Daesoon Jinrihoe does not consider desire a taboo. For this Korean religion, desire also implies an appropriate ambition, which may promote progress and betterment. Problems, however, emerge when inappropriate desires arise to satisfy one's own selfishness (Yun 2012, 179). Daesoon Jinrihoe

encourages appropriate ambition but warns that inappropriate desire should be avoided.

Daesoon Jinrihoe also notes that, whether positive or not, if the desire is not granted, despair and suffering are created. Negative wishes such as vain desires, obsessions, or grudges cause sufferings. Here, an SPD model applies, “Self-Perpetrators Who Conceives Vain Desires, Obsessions, and Grievances.” Vain desires often result in excessive expectations about us or others. As the vain desire leads to obsession and creates grievances, in the end, it causes a suffering that eats itself. It may not be easy to see that the principle of mutual overcoming is also at work in this case. This kind of suffering does not have a meaning or value for human beings. Therefore, it is necessary to get rid of vain desires. Daesoon Jinrihoe summarizes its methods for achieving this result as follows: regaining a pure conscience of our nature, observing our behavior by law and manner, throwing away any vanity, getting rid of selfish motives that trigger earthly desires, and looking back, and reflecting, on ourselves (Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2014, 17–8).

In addition, Daesoon Jinrihoe’s recipe includes self-reflection and practice of mutual beneficence in a specific way. The principle of mutual beneficence includes two notions: resolving grievances for mutual beneficence (解冤相生), and creating harmony through the grateful reciprocation of favors (報恩相生). The former notion implies that we should be fair and righteous in every affair, as well as honest and trustworthy. We should also not give others new reasons for grudges, and this may only be achieved by getting rid of vanity and living within limits. If some hold grudges against each other, they should try to love each other as a way of resolving the grievances.

The second notion indicates that we should help each other, by repaying all the blessings we have received from Heaven and Earth, the nation and society, neighbors and teachers. Such attitude and practice of mutual beneficence constantly remind us of our limits and positions. It also enables us to consider the betterment of others rather than our own benefits only, which allows to dismiss excessive and vain desires, obsessions, and grudges (*Daesoonhoebo* 2 1984, 2). Therefore, in the theology and ethics of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the practice of resolving grievances for mutual beneficence, and creating harmony through the grateful reciprocation of favors, becomes a method to remove sufferings caused by SPD.

At the same time, the *Jeong-yeong* also discusses the situations in which sufferings occur because of positive desire. One such case is the ELJ model, “Enforcement of Law or Practice of Justice.” Often, suffering is created in the process of enforcing the laws and the public order or justice. This ELJ model, where suffering is created in the process of realizing justice, overlaps with the VMOH model we previously discussed, “Victims of Mutual Overcoming Caused by Humans.”

The *Jeong-yeong* presents historical cases such as Jeon Bong-Jun (1854–1895), the leader of the Donghak Peasant Revolution of 1894, who tried to work for the betterment of others but ended up being executed, and the Jesuit Catholic missionary Matteo Ricci (1552–1610), who tried to establish an earthly paradise in China but failed due to the social circumstances of the times (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Reordering Works* 3:2; *Progress of the Order* 1:9, 1:50 and 2:57). It is generally assumed that the sufferings occurred in the process of enforcing the laws or realizing justice have positive values. As it implies a definite purpose to realize the ideal of good, this kind of suffering is worthy enough to endure. In the process of realizing justice or enforcing the laws fairly, it would be ideal that sufferings would not occur. However, Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that we still live in the Former World ruled by mutual overcoming, and this is unlikely to happen. Even just acts may be distorted by abuse because of the prevalence of mutual overcoming in the Former World. These sufferings will only disappear, together with mutual overcoming, in the Later World.

In addition to the ELJ model, the *Jeong-yeong* presents other examples of sufferings created by positive desire. They can be classified as part of the CERT model, “Cultivation, Enacting the Reordering of the Universe, Ritual Practices, Promotion of Fortune, Tests.” There are sufferings we experience when cultivating or disciplining ourselves, making efforts for promoting our fortune and happiness, or preparing for tests. Some of these are vain cases, when the sufferings do not bring forth good fruit but end up in complaints only. But the results, and the human attitude when confronted with misfortune, do not change the root causes why the sufferings occur.

These cases fall under the CERT model. Daesoon Jinrihoe defines the present condition of the world as the age when Heaven gives birth to humankind and works with humans. They are called to participate in the work of Heaven and Earth. In Daesoon Jinrihoe’s theology, Heaven and Earth are believed to be

ultimately fair and just to humans according to their circumstances and affairs. Humans are also submitted to tests. The *Jeong-yeong* explains that tests include subjects such as household management, each man's and woman's nature and broad-mindedness, as well as the agony of mind, physical pain, starvation, economic suffering, and afflictions caused by failures at work (*Jeong-yeong* [2010], *Acts* 3:50 and 4:31; *Reordering Works* 1:15, 1:18 and 3:21; *Progress of the Order* 1:39; *Dharma* 1:42). The proper reaction to these trials is not harboring grievances against Heaven but reflecting on our condition and endure the sufferings. Humans who pass the tests, Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches, will be protected by divine beings and supported by Heaven. Accepting sufferings caused by CERT in the Former World is a deed of considerable value, and indeed hastens the coming of the Later World.

Mutual Overcoming	1. No Liability to Humans		MOC	Mutual Overcoming of the Cosmos
	2. Victim's Perspective		VMOH	Victims of Mutual Overcoming Caused by Humans
			VMOO	Victims of Mutual Overcoming Caused by Others
			VUD	Victims of Unintended Deeds
	3. Perpetrator's Perspective		PPT	Punishment of the Perpetrator or Transgressor
			PUW	Punishment of the Perpetrator or Transgressor for Unintended Wrongdoing
	4. Matter of Desire	Appropriate Ambition	SPD	Self-Perpetrators Who Conceive Vain Desires, Obsessions, and Grievances
		Inappropriate desire	ELJ	Enforcement of Law or Practice of Justice
			CERT	Cultivation, Enacting the Reordering of the Universe, Ritual Practices, Promotion of Fortune, Tests

Table 1. Four Categories and Nine Models of Suffering in Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Conclusion: Suffering in Daesoon Jinrihoe and in Traditional East Asian Religions

Those experiencing severe sufferings ask why exactly this is happening to them. It is both an age-old and a reasonable question. When practicing religious cultivation, Daesoon Jinrihoe followers interact with mentors (called *seon-gak*, lit. “the ones who have become enlightened before”) and receive advice from them. Mentors offer a third person's point of view and, when confronted with suffering, can classify individual cases into the nine models and the four categories, revealing to the devotees the precise causes of their afflictions.

Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that the first reason for the sufferings derives from the mutual overcoming program of the cosmos (MOC). Secondly, suffering is attributed to the mutual overcoming caused by nations and societies, as well as other organized groups (VMOH). Third, it results from the intentional mutual overcoming acts of individual humans (VMOO). Fourth, also unintentional acts by humans may create mutual overcoming (VUD). Fifth, some humans are sinners and offenders, and are punished or must pay a price (PPT). Sixth, our own deeds may unintentionally create mutual overcoming and be punished (PUW). Seventh, sufferings exist because humans create further mutual overcoming through their own vain desires, obsessions, and grievances. Eighth, some experience sufferings from mutual overcoming during the process of implementing law, public order, and justice (ELJ). Ninth, in a world ruled by mutual overcoming, tests are administered to those who practice self-cultivation, participate in the Reordering Works of the Universe, or are under evaluation (CERT).

In this context, Daesoon Jinrihoe provides solutions to the problem of suffering in the shape of a religious portfolio. A mentor and a devotee who is in a situation of suffering can pick and choose an explanation from this portfolio. Or more than one, as the causes for afflictions in actual cases do not come one at a time. Often, two or more models should be applied at the same time. In the end, religions that offer insufficient solutions to sufferings are perceived as unappealing. Perhaps the fact that Daesoon Jinrihoe offers several consistent and various solutions to the problem of suffering is another explanation why this Korean new religion has grown so much in such a short time.

The traditional religions of East Asia have also presented their own answers to questions about suffering. Buddhism teaches that, since suffering is caused by obsession and desire, we should remove these causes of our misfortunes. Confucianism considers that the causes of suffering are wrongdoings resulting from either heavenly will or human desire. Humans should endure afflictions unconditionally. Daoism claims that human-made mistakes cause suffering. To get away from the sufferings, we should respect the divine order of nature. What these religions have in common is that they all perceive human desire as a major cause of suffering, and all recommend the control of desire, although they differ on whether we should accept or escape afflictions. This is based on the respective ideas about the divine or human origin of suffering. In Confucianism, sufferings

are considered as divine punishment or part of the heavenly mandate, while Buddhism teaches that our afflictions result from human action in this or in past lives.

Daesoon Jinrihoe's theology of suffering differs from the traditional East Asian religions in four respects. First, the entire frame that explains the causes of suffering in Daesoon Jinrihoe is mutual overcoming. Without exceptions, all kinds of afflictions are related to mutual overcoming. This cosmic framework is not present in other religions. Daesoon Jinrihoe does not exclude the human responsibility for suffering. Mutual overcoming is often produced by humans, although it is also influenced by its cosmic dimension. However, the faults committed by humans, individually or as social groups, cannot be justified.

Secondly, for Daesoon Jinrihoe the main question is not whether suffering should be accepted or avoided, but whether its circumstances should be evaluated as positive or negative. In the P lineage models (PPT and PUW), the afflictions are a form of penance. Suffering may be connected to positive values such as the realization of justice, law, and public order, and the self-development and self-improvement through discipline. Human nurture of wealth and happiness is connected to suffering in the ELJ and CERT models. On the contrary, there is no redeeming value of suffering in the V lineage models, nor in the MOC model. There, the experience of suffering does not lead to human growth.

Third, Daesoon Jinrihoe teaches that suffering can be removed by striving towards a religious goal, reflecting on ourselves to wash away our sins, abandoning vain desires, pursuing mutual beneficence, disciplining ourselves for a better future, and so on. In a word, suffering is overcome through self-cultivation.

Fourth, Daesoon Jinrihoe's perception of suffering is social. To overcome the suffering caused by vain desire, it emphasizes mutual beneficence, an active practice that does not remain within an individual sphere of self-control but necessarily includes others. The traditional religions of East Asia agree on the theory that vain desire is a main cause of suffering. But they focus on removing the vain desire. Buddhism insists that we should practice the Noble Eightfold Path, getting rid of greed and obsessions. Confucianism calls for a restoration of the order through its theory of the rectification of names, focusing on human nature and proper behavior. Daoism asserts that we should turn to nature and Dao. Christianity also teaches its devotees to get rid of selfishness by obeying

God. All these practices, however, mostly remain within the circle of the individual person and her mind.

Daesoon Jinrihoe also insists on right mindfulness and right behavior. However, its final solution to the problem of vain desire is resolving grievances for mutual beneficence and creating harmony through the grateful reciprocation of favors. These are practices to be carried out in social life. We straighten ourselves out by doing good to others at the same time. In this respect, Daesoon Jinrihoe's notion of how suffering can be overcome is different from the theories and practices of the traditional religions of East Asia, which have focused on the individual sphere rather than on the social dimension.

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The Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex as a Center for Social Welfare and Humanitarian Aid

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ABSTRACT: As Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923) noted, Christianity regarded the love of God and the charitable service to fellow human beings as necessarily united. The Cathedral Square of Siena, where one of the oldest hospitals in the world was built next to the cathedral, is one among several spatial examples of this principle. But this wholistic theology is also found in Eastern religions, both old and new. The theology of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the largest Korean new religion, is centered on the idea of “mutual beneficence,” and has generated an impressive network of charitable and social welfare activities, now expanding internationally from Korea. Like Cathedral Square in Siena, the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex of Daesoon Jinrihoe serves as both the spiritual and the social welfare center of the religion.

KEYWORDS: Daesoon Jinrihoe, Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex, Kang Jeungsan, Park Wudang, Mutual Beneficence, Daejin International Volunteers Association (DIVA).

Reading Troeltsch in Siena

One of the most famous 20th century books about religion is *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, published in 1912 (and translated into English by theologian Olive Wyon, 1881–1966, in 1931) by German theologian, historian and social scientist Ernst Troeltsch (1865–1923). The book (Troeltsch 1912, 1931) is often quoted today for its distinction between “church” and “sect.” However, this was not its main focus.

The main argument of Troeltsch was that Christianity was gradually transformed from a millenarian sect awaiting the imminent end of the world into a church with a strong social ethic, partially derived from Greek and Roman sources. The center of Christianity became love of fellow human beings, which

manifested in a number of charitable works that were perceived as integrated, rather than separated, from the Christian love of God (Molendijk 2018, 57). This ethos had a spatial dimension, and Christians built complexes that were at the same time sacred spaces and centers of charity and welfare.

I was reminded of this spatiality of Christian social teachings while visiting the Italian city of Siena in January 2018. In Siena, Piazza Duomo, or Cathedral Square, hosts both a magnificent cathedral and an institution called Santa Maria della Scala, which was part of the same complex. Santa Maria della Scala is one of the oldest hospitals in the world, but it was much more. The sick, if they were poor, were given free meals and treatments. Abandoned and neglected children found a home, clothing, and schooling. Meals were served to the poor three times a week, and girls in need received a dowry and help to find a suitable husband (Baron 1990).

Troeltsch may be a good guide in visiting Santa Maria della Scala, discovering its many spaces for prayer and meditation, and understanding that it was not separated from the cathedral. The question whether it was a religious or charitable space does not make sense: it was both. There was no special separation between religion and social welfare in Medieval Siena, and pilgrims came to visit both a sacred space and a unique social institution.

Daesoon Jinrihoe and Social Welfare

While it is well possible that Christians invented the modern hospital, with Santa Maria Nuova in Florence as a credible competitor of Siena's Santa Maria della Scala for the title of the oldest such institution in the world (Park and Henderson 1991), only a Eurocentric prejudice would claim that only Christians were able to build spaces that at the same time were deeply sacred and provided social welfare services. This happened in most other religions. Buddhist temples provided a range of social services in the past, and continue to do so today. For example, in Japan as early as in 593 CE, "a large Buddhist temple called Shitennoh-ji was completed [...] by Prince Shotoku [574–622] and had attached to it a hospital, dispensary, orphanage and almshouse" (Iwasa 1966, 241). It has been claimed that India had its first institutions similar to hospitals roughly at the same time as Europe (Agrawal and Goyal 2011).

New religions in Eastern Asia continue this tradition, and some of them have created impressive systems of social welfare. One example is Daesoon Jinrihoe, the largest Korean new religion, which recognizes, as the incarnated Supreme God, Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909). Kang himself created an integrated sacred and social space with the Donggok Clinic, where he cured both physical and spiritual illnesses, and where he passed away in 1909.

Kang performed in the Donggok Clinic a special set of rituals known as “the Reordering Work for the Clinics of All Nations,” which is described by Daesoon Jinrihoe as follows:

In 1908, He [Kang] built Copper Valley (Donggok) Clinic and carried out the Reordering Work for the Clinics of All Nations to save humanity from all diseases. He said “with this Work I will revive the dead, allow the blind to regain their sight, allow the crippled to walk once more, and clear away all diseases.” He further added, “Those who receive ‘Descending Spirit’ from Heaven will be able to cure the sick with merely a touch or even a glance. In the future, the ‘Descending Spirit’ from Heaven will come down to you. Therefore, you should sincerely devote yourselves in cultivation” (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017, 20).

These are prophetic words about a better world, an earthly paradise promised for the future. But they also indicate that hospitals and clinics were important for Kang, and he asked his disciples to approach them with care and love.

In Daesoon Thought, the omniscient and omnipresent Supreme God, who incarnated as Kang Jeungsan, presides over three realms: Heaven, Earth, and Humanity. God’s Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth performed by Kang Jeungsan—“many” of which took place at the location of Donggok Clinic, including the potential “curing of all forms of disease in the world” (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017, 20)—are supposed to rectify disorders that accumulated over thousands of years. Although God, i.e. Kang Jeungsan, did complete this truly global Work, humanity should cooperate by practicing the principle of reciprocating favors out of gratitude (*Boeun sangsaeng*).

The key principle of Daesoon Jinrihoe is “the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence” (*Haewon sangsaeng*). It is both a religious and a social principle. It deals with the whole universe and with cosmic grievances to be resolved, yet at the same time it calls for overcoming widespread human grievances and for a concrete mutual beneficence through social welfare (Kim 2017).

Park Wudang (1917–1995 in the lunar calendar used by the movement, or 1918–1996 according to the solar calendar) succeeded in the religious orthodoxy recognized by Daesoon Jinrihoe after Kang Jeungsan and Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958). One of his major achievements was the building of the magnificent Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex. At the same time, Park Wudang put the principles of *Haewon sangsaeng* and *Boeun sangsaeng* into practice, by making the Yeosu Headquarters the center of an impressive network of Daesoon Jinrihoe's social welfare activities.

Daesoon Jinrihoe believes that among living beings there is a type of symbiotic relationship known in biology as “mutualism.” Two organisms interact in such a manner that both parties benefit, such as when bees produce honey:

Flowers benefit from the cross pollination that occurs when honey bees fly from flower to flower, and honey bees benefit from the large variety of essential nutrients that they acquire from pollen. There is a certain beauty in this relationship, yet, in truth, no altruism is taking place. Anthropomorphically speaking, bees do not awake one day and think, “We should do something nice for those flowers over there by moving their pollen around for them.” Nor are the flowers then moved to politely offer, “Keep some pollen for yourselves. You’ve more than earned it.” Both parties are in it for themselves, but they benefit each other as a ‘happy coincidence’ (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017, 11).

Mutualism is a natural law, and already has several beneficial effects. However, “mutual beneficence” goes much further, as it requires “both parties to be motivated by pure intentions to benefit one another” (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017, 11). Conversely, when “mutual beneficence” is practiced with sincere heart, its benefits for society are much greater than those of mutualism.

On the other hand, the biological sphere, ruled by mutualism, and the human sphere, ideally ruled by mutual beneficence, are strictly related. Mutual beneficence requires a respect and love for nature. Ko Young Woon regards Daesoon Jinrihoe as an ecological religion:

Sangsaeng, mutual beneficence of all life, leads human beings and nature to grow with each other in yin-yang harmony. The correlative cosmology of the opposite elements of yin and yang is developed in the patterns of diversity-in-unity and unity-in-diversity. The serial relationship of the patterns is that of the life and nature of the universe. By way of this close connection between the images of yin and yang, Daesoon presents the idea of mutual transformation in the process of the development of the cosmos. “The key of Daesoon thought is to make peace. The peace of humankind is to realize the infinite truth of the Way by embracing, respecting, and loving others. The Way is the initiation of the universe and leading the change of life and growth.” From the view of this correlative cosmology, human

beings and nature respect and support each other, whereby natural worlds continue to produce their sources for the human world, and humans protect and love nature. For the ecological view of Daesoon, mutual beneficence is the ultimate principle to practice the peace and harmony of human and natural worlds (Ko 2016, 79).

This is also connected with the water-fire relation, which in Daesoon Thought corresponds to the relation between *yin* and *yang*, as “water comes from fire and vice versa” (Ko 2016, 79).

The Yeosu Headquarters (which I visited repeatedly: what follows is largely based on personal observation and interviews) oversee a global Daesoon Jinrihoe network in three major activities: charity, social welfare, and education, to which Daesoon Jinrihoe claims to consecrate over 70% of its financial resources, with yearly expenses that by 2014 had reached \$ 680 million (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017, 73). All these activities have now a global outreach. For example, the number of foreign students at Daesoon Jinrihoe’s Daejin University in Pocheon City is continuously increasing, as is the number of academic international exchanges, with Daejin University professors and graduate students lecturing and presenting in academic conferences throughout the world.

Providing health and social welfare services is an integral part of mutual beneficence. With deep roots in the Korean tradition, providing for the elderly is a special priority of Daesoon Jinrihoe. Daesoon Jinrihoe operates a geriatric hospital (capacity: 140), elderly nursing facilities (170) and an elderly welfare center (30). The nursing facilities are based on the principle of the Unit Care System, defined as

an elderly nursing unit with multiple rooms to accommodate patients individually; thereby providing them with increased privacy and protection. One unit includes eight to twelve single rooms and a large living room with a homelike atmosphere (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017, 81).

The principle of the “homelike atmosphere” is what mostly impressed me when I visited Yeosu’s social welfare facilities, and is deeply connected with Daesoon Jinrihoe’s theology. It is important that the sick and the elderly do not feel marginalized in an asylum-like atmosphere, but perceive themselves as active participants in the *Haewon sangsaeng* mutual exchange. Daesoon Jinrihoe has built hospitals that do not look like hospitals and nursing homes that do not look like nursing homes. This is appreciated by those who benefit of their services, but also by the Korean National Health Insurance Corporation, which from 2013

has consistently awarded its highest score to Daejin Elderly Nursing Facilities. Specialists from China and Vietnam also came to Yeosu to study how the Unit Care System is implemented.

The Daejin Medical Foundation dates back to 1991. Daesoon Jinrihoe's main hospital, Bundang Jesaeng Hospital, was built in 1998. It has currently 31 departments and 760 beds. The Daejin Welfare Foundation started its activities in 2007. In 2009, the Daejin Medical Care Institute was established. The Korean National Health Insurance Service recognized it as an A-level institution in 2012.

The Bundang Jesaeng Hospital has been certified by Korean medical authorities as a reliable, leading institution, equipped with modern, cutting-edge medical diagnostic and treatment systems. The hospital uses volunteers to provide a better and wider range of services. While volunteers are mostly members of Daesoon Jinrihoe, medical care is offered to anybody who qualifies for admission, irrespective of religious affiliation. Two other hospitals, Dongducheon Jesaeng Hospital (1,500 beds) and Goseong Jesaeng Hospital (500) are currently being constructed.

Just as other activities of Daesoon Jinrihoe, health care is going through a process of globalization. In August 2015, the International Medical Volunteer Corps was launched, to offer medical services to Koreans and local people living in poor conditions in Kyrgyzstan.

Certified programs to train young people as effective volunteers for Daejin Medical Care Hospital are offered by Daejin Youth Center. More generally, the mission of the Youth Center, which was established in 2014, is to empower young people to become future responsible leaders of their country. Programs for children are also part of Yeosu Headquarters' activities.

Park Wudang taught members of Daesoon Jinrihoe to "do your best to give love and hope to people neglected from society by helping them to rehabilitate and begin new lives on their own" (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017, 75). He founded the Daesoon Men's Association and the Daesoon Women's Association in 1981, both having within their respective mandates to assist the needy, the disabled, the orphans, and to offer relief to the victims of the floods, which are frequent and ruinous in Korea.

Not unlike health care, Daesoon Jinrihoe's charity is being globalized as well. Humanitarian aid started being brought to Kenya and Ethiopia in 2009. Daejin

International Volunteers Association (DIVA) was founded in 2013. Originally, it operated in Korea by delivering food and medicines to the elderly's homes, and helping them with home repairs. Soon, DIVA started operating in Mongolia and Vietnam, to the benefit of both the elderly and disadvantaged children. DIVA's activities in Vietnam include assistance to Vietnamese medical practitioners to improve their services, health care education classes, first aid education, cultural exchanges, scholarships offered to Vietnamese students from low-income families, and a Korean Language Center at Hanoi Nguyen Trai University. Daesoon Jinrihoe is proud to report that DIVA

was selected as one of the outstanding volunteering organizations of 2014 in Gyeonggi Province. It was also chosen as a Designated Donation Body by the Ministry of Strategy and Finance in 2015. Next year, it was registered as an NGO in the Ministry of Government Administration and Home Affairs (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2017, 77).

Conclusion

From this short survey of Daesoon Jinrihoe's social welfare activities, two aspects emerge as particularly important. The first is that social and charitable services are provided *by* Daesoon Jinrihoe devotees *to* a constituency that consists in its majority of persons in need who are not members of the religion. There is an "internal globalization" at the level of Daesoon Jinrihoe theology, expressed by the universal scope of the principle of *Haewon sangsaeng*, which is now manifesting itself as "external globalization," in the shape of humanitarian aid to people of several diverse countries and religions (see Bae and Kim 2018).

The second important aspect is the key role of the Yeosu Headquarters. That so many social welfare institutions are located within the Yeosu Complex is not coincidental, nor does it serve only a practical purpose. The globalization of social welfare is not separated from globalization of spirituality in Daesoon Thought. A major step towards the latter globalization was achieved in June 2018 in Taiwan, where Daesoon Jinrihoe, Cao Dai from Vietnam and Weixin Shengjiao from Taiwan signed a "Joint Memorandum of Understanding" for further mutual cooperation, including through joint events abroad, inaugurating an Association of East Asian New Religions (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2018). Weixin Shengjiao strongly believes in a universal resolution of grievances, which inspires a vast array of charitable services (Chang 2017), and from its very beginning Cao

Dai's Holy See of Tay Ninh included institutions for "social work and charity services," which functioned as "a true welfare and social agency" (Blagov 1999, 96). New religions with very different theologies have forged an alliance, recognizing each other as kindred spirits in a passionate search for a better and more compassionate world, free of grievances and hate.

As for Daesoon Jinrihoe, the Yeosu Headquarters Temple Complex is the center of the religion. It offers to the believers deep spiritual experiences and esoteric rituals. At the same time, it serves as the pulsating heart of an international network of social welfare activities. Under the principle of *Haewon sangsaeng*, the two spheres are not separated. Like Piazza Duomo in Siena, the Yeosu Headquarters offer a holistic experience catering to the spirit, the heart, and the body at the same time.

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**Problems in Researching Korean New Religions:
A Case Study of Daesoon Jinrihoe**

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ABSTRACT: From the birth of Donghak in 1860, some 500 new religions have been established in Korea. More than 100 of them were, or are, part of the “Jeungsanist” family, which recognizes Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909) as the incarnated Supreme God. Korean scholars have tried to identify common features of both Korean new religions and “Jeungsanism.” Kang Don-Ku and others have criticized this approach, claiming that generalizations should be based on a sufficient number of ethnographic studies of single new religions, which are still lacking. Worse still, some studies of Korean new religions are based on hostile accounts published by rival religionists rather than on primary sources. The article discusses problems on studying Korean new religions, and criticizes the article by John Jorgensen on Daesoon Jinrihoe, the largest Jeungsanist religion, published in the 2018 Brill’s *Handbook of East Asian New Religious Movements*, as a somewhat typical example of these problems.

KEYWORDS: Korean New Religions, Kang Jeungsan, Jeungsanism, Daesoon Jinrihoe, John Jorgensen.

Introduction

Half of the Korean population professes a faith, whereas the other half does not. Those who claim a faith can be divided into two groups: devotees of Western religions and devotees of Eastern religions. A unique feature of Korea’s religious demographics is that religious Koreans and non-religious Koreans, as well as adherents of Western religions and adherents of Eastern religions are all

represented in similar numbers. Religious demographics of this nature have been described as an unprecedented phenomenon in the history of world religions (Kang 2001, 15–6). Obviously, studies of the religious landscape of Korea are of special interest for scholars of religion.

However, detailed ethnographic studies of specific Korean religions remain scarce. Sources are often insufficient, and archival research has been neglected. A few scholars have tried to draw attention to the need of resolving this problem. Among them is Kang Don-Ku (강돈구, 1955–), who has been the only two-time (2005–2007 and 2011–2013) president of the Korean Association for Religious Studies, and currently teaches at the Department of Religious Studies in the Academy of Korean Studies (see Kang 2011a, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2017a, 2017b). Kang is a renowned scholar of Korean new religions, and has criticized studies that have ignored the primary sources and the archives, and relied almost exclusively on secondary materials.

Kang insists that several scholars did not approach Korean new religions in their own terms. Rather, they tried to adapt the conventional methodology used to study traditional religions, which led to a misinterpretation of Korean new religions. Kang also believes that studies of specific new religions (often called “religious orders” in Korea) should be carried out before generalizing on Korean new religions, and that this is an urgent issue in Korean academic circles (Kang 1987, 222).

Kang encouraged other scholars to participate in a systematic study of the Korean new religions. The project resulted in *A Study of Korean Religious Orders*, first published by the Academy of Korean Studies in 2007 and which went through 11 editions until 2018 (Academy of Korean Studies 2018). Despite these efforts, research on Korean new religions based on primary sources is still in its infancy (Yoo 2014, 108–9 and 116–19). The new religions keep being compared to established religions such as Buddhism or Christianity, at the risk of unavoidable distortions.

Modern Korean new religions started blooming in 1860, when Choe Je-u (崔濟愚, 1824–1864) founded Donghak (Eastern Learning). It is estimated that approximately 150 to 500 new religions have been established since that time. The exact number is hard to calculate. Yoon Yee-Heum estimated it between 150

and 200 (Yoon 1987, 180) while Kim Hong-Cheol mentioned 500-odd orders (Kim 1998, 1).

One of the largest Korean new religions is Daesoon Jinrihoe (Fellowship of Daesoon Truth). It traces its origins back to Kang Jeungsan (姜甌山, 1871–1909), and its headquarters are in Yeosu, Gyeonggi Province. Daesoon Jinrihoe is exceptional for its rapid growth in a short period of time, and Kang Don-Ku estimates that at one point it became one of the four major religions in Korea, alongside Buddhism, Protestantism and Catholicism (Kang 2011b, 238).

This religious order currently enjoys a good reputation due to its active engagement in charity and relief, social welfare, and education, wherein it claims it spends over seventy percent of all its collected donations. For this reason, Daesoon Jinrihoe is now viewed more positively in Korea, thanks to its social contributions, than the other religious orders with which it is frequently compared (Introvigne 2017). However, intentionally distorted views and materials on Daesoon Jinrihoe are also frequently circulated.

The reasons for this criticism vary, but can be summarized as follows. First, all religions in the lineage of Kang Jeungsan, commonly referred to as “Jeungsanist,” were condemned as pseudo-religions due to their promotion of the Korean national identity during the Japanese colonial period. This also happened to other Korean new religions (Lee 2016). As a result, some of this bias lingered in Korean media even after the liberation. Second, the Korean religious market is dynamic (Yoo 2014), and there is an obvious competition between different religions. Because of its rapid growth, Daesoon Jinrihoe was perceived as a competitor and criticized both by Christians and by members of rival Jeungsanist religions. Third, the order that eventually assumed the name Daesoon Jinrihoe underwent several previous name-changes, as well as structural changes.

Daesoon Jinrihoe regards itself as the heir of Mugeukdo, established in 1925, and Taegeukdo, founded in 1950. The name Daesoon Jinrihoe has been used since 1969. As it often happens in the history of religions, each of these passages was accompanied by dissension and schisms (Introvigne 2017). As a result, accurate information on the order has not always been easy to access even for insiders, not to mention outsiders. We acknowledge that studying Daesoon Jinrihoe is not an easy task. On the other hand, the study is necessary, precisely

because Daesoon Jinrihoe is one of the largest, if not the largest, new religion in Korea (Baker 2016, 1–2).

Korean scholars of new religions have often been unable to recognize these problems themselves. They have taken at face value accounts of Daesoon Jinrihoe produced by its religious competitors. This is a delicate as well as a key point: accounts of a new religion by rival religionists are interesting for understanding the latter's point of view, but cannot be considered as reliable sources for studying the religion they criticize. And the situation becomes even worse when, through Korean scholars, biased accounts reach scholars overseas, who have an interest in Korean religions but should overcome a language barrier.

In this paper, we discuss an article by John Jorgensen, included in the valuable *Handbook of East Asian New Religious Movements* (2018), edited by Lukas Pokorny and Franz Winter (Jorgensen 2018a). Our aim is not to engage in destructive criticism, but to emphasize how this article is an example of the erroneous perspectives often encountered in studies of Korean new religions, and this even if Jorgensen has an excellent knowledge of the Korean language and religious history.

In the second paragraph, we discuss some general problems in the study of Korean new religions in general and Jeungsanist religions in particular. In the third, we offer some specific criticism of Jorgensen's article.

Some General Problems

A. The Study of Korean New Religions

A traditional approach by Korean scholars of religious studies has insisted that Korean new religions share six common characteristics: an integration of doctrines from Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism, and Christianity; a relationship with shamanism; a nationalist faith in the Korean people as the chosen people; the idea that an earthly paradise will soon be established; messianic beliefs; and an emphasis on apocalypticism. Yet, Kang noted that these are not necessarily common characteristics in all Korean new religions, and even if they were, they would not constitute “unique or ingenious” factors embedded in Korean new religions (Kang 1987).

For example, the integration of doctrines from different religions can be found in any number of other religions as well. Accusations of “syncretism,” a contested category in itself, may easily lead to value judgements. The other five “common features” of Korean new religions also appear in both Korean *old* religions and non-Korean new religions (with the messianic role of Korea replaced by the messianic role of the United States, Japan, or other countries). Most importantly, according to Kang, it was too early to generalize about Korean new religions when accurate studies of the single largest new religions were still lacking (Kang 1987, 201–7).

Kang struck Korean academic circles with this criticism in 1987, more than thirty years ago, but the situation remains very much the same. Most books and dissertations published today still list these “assumed” common characteristics of Korean new religions, then proceed to explain the “uniqueness” of the religious order they discuss. Whether the generalization is really accurate is rarely examined.

A good example of these problems is the often-repeated theory that *all* Korean new religions include the concepts of the Great Opening, the Later World, and mutual beneficence. The Great Opening and the Later World are seen by scholars as closely related ideas, based on a circular view of history (循環史觀) and perception of destiny (時運觀) (Cha 2013, 221–24).

It is generally argued that ideas about the Great Opening and the Later World are based on an “organic” worldview, and appeared at a time of widespread dissatisfaction with the existing social hierarchy, when the desire for liberation also included the aim of “resolution of grievances.” The Great Opening and the Later World were meant to achieve the harmonious integration of all ideologies and religions, as well as support the dream of an earthly paradise, which would soon appear and restore human identity and integrity. This earthly paradise will bring abundance, peace, prosperity, and redemption, both in spiritual and mundane terms. Korea, as a leading country, will guide all humankind to this ideal world (Ro 1989; see also Kim 1994, 12 and 71–2; Ryu, 1996, 138–39; Ro 2003, 64–6; Kim 2012, 12–39; Park 2012b, 44–55; Yoon, 2012, 173–75).

However, what is missing in these reconstructions is that the concept of Great Opening of Donghak (Eastern Learning) and the family of new religions

originating from Donghak, known as Cheondoism, is based on a circular view of history and perception of destiny that is not shared by other new religions, including Daesoon Jinrihoe. An “organic” worldview is common in Eastern religions and culture, rather than being a unique characteristic of Korean new religions. The concept of “resolution of grievances” is common in some Jeungsanist religions, but not in other Korean new religions.

It may be generally true that Korean new religions typically carry the intention of integrating all ideologies and religions into one. However, Choe Je-u, the founder of Donghak, denounced the religions and cultures of the West and Japan (Kallander 2013). Awaiting an earthly paradise and emphasizing human identity and dignity are not unique features of Korean new religions either. And that Korea would emerge as a leading nation and guide the world is an idea that has been actively discussed in some Korean new religions only, particularly in the Jeungsanist family (Kang 1985, 305–6; Kang 1987, 206; Yoon 1985; Park 2012a, 70–1; Cha 2013, 223).

Kang’s comments remain crucial here. To come to conclusions about Korean new religions, the collection and analysis of primary sources of the individual religious order each scholar is researching should be a priority. However, several scholars who have researched Korean new religions seem to have neglected it entirely. As a result, inaccurate details have been perpetuated, repeating the conclusions of previous research without double-checking its validity. Such misinformation on Korean new religions has also been passed to scholars abroad.

B. The Study of Jeungsanist Religions

These problems apply to the study of all Korean new religions. The Jeungsanist lineage, which includes the largest number of Korean new religions, is a prime example. In fact, in world religious history, it is rather uncommon to find a religious lineage that had already divided itself into more than sixty factions in its first fifty years of existence (Yoon 1991, 115) While new Jeungsanist factions continue to appear, even in recent times, the oldest Jeungsanist orders strive to maintain their own stances on matters related to their object of faith, scripture, doctrinal system, and cultivation practices (Kim 1992, 395–98; Lee 2012, 124).

Goh Pan-Lye (고판례, 1880–1935), a female disciple of Kang Jeungsan, founded the first order, Seondogyo (Immortal Taoism), in 1911. Among the disciples of Kang Jeungsan, she was known as *Subu* (수부, 首婦, “head lady”), but the scope of this title is contested. Some orders go so far that they make Goh Pan-Lye a divine incarnation equal to Kang Jeungsan, while others, while not denying her historical role, note that there were two different *Subu* in Kang Jeungsan’s early circle. They argue that one day before dying, Kang appointed a second *Subu*, Mal-Sun (김말순, 1890–1911), a daughter of one of his leading disciples, Kim Hyeong-Ryeol (김형렬, 1862–1932), and performed with her a mysterious religious ritual. Mal-Sun died young, at age 21, and did not play a role in Kang’s succession.

Goh’s lineage went into an enormously complicated sequel of schisms. Goh’s relative, Cha Gyeong-Seok (차경석, 1880–1936), became the leader of her branch, which he called Taeulgyo and ruled in an authoritarian way, greatly limiting the role of Goh, who finally left him and established a small separate group, which used again the name Seondogyo, in 1918. Cha established Bocheonism, which for a short period became the largest Korean new religion and possibly the largest religion in Korea. Kim Hyeong-Ryeol first promoted Kang Jeungsan’s widow, Jeong (정치순, 1874–1928), as the master’s successor, then claimed to have received a heavenly revelation and established an independent order, Maitreya Buddhism.

Goh eventually joined forces with Lee Sangho (이상호, 1888–1967), who recognized her as Kang’s successor. Lee Sangho, a former member of Bocheonism, with his brother Lee Jeongnip (이정립, 1895–1968), established various organizations and finally Jeungsangyo Headquarters. The Lees were the first and second patriarchs of Jeungsangyo Headquarters and were succeeded by Hong Beom-Cho (홍범초, 1935–2001), who was murdered on October 25, 2001, as the third patriarch. One former member of the Lee brothers branch, Ahn Un-san (안운산, 1922–2012), established Jeung San Do, which eventually grew into the second largest Jeungsanist branch after Daesoon Jinrihoe and is currently led by Ahn’s son, Ahn Gyeong-jeon (안경전, 1954–).

What eventually became the largest branch originated with Jo Cheol-Je, known to his disciples as Jo Jeongsan (趙鼎山, 1895–1958). Jo was not a direct disciple of Kang Jeungsan, but claimed to have received a revelation from him in 1917.

Having been recognized as Kang's successor by several members of Kang's family, he organized his order as Mugeukdo in 1925. After problems due to the Japanese occupation and the war, he reorganized it as Taegeukdo, and died in 1958. Divisions among Jo's disciples led to the foundation of Daesoon Jinrihoe in 1969 by Park Wudang (박우당, 1917–1995 according to the lunar calendar normally used by the movement, or 1918–1996 in the solar calendar), while the name Taegeukdo remained with the faction lead for a short period of time by one of Jo's sons, Jo Yongnae (조영래, 1934–2004).

There have been several attempts to unify the various Jeungsanist new religions (Hong 2001). Different attempts were led by Lee Sangho in 1926, his brother Lee Jeongnip and Yoo Dongnyeol (유동렬, 1879–?) in 1945, Lee Jeongnip again in 1955, and Hong Beom-Cho in 1971 (Kim forthcoming). However, all these attempts failed. The Jeungsanist orders were too different between each other, and each leader wanted to merge all groups into his or her own. In the meantime, the cult of the mythical first king of Korea, Dangun, had been introduced in the institutional belief system of some Jeungsanist groups as a consequence first of the Japanese occupation and later of the presence of the United States military. The Jeungsanist identity had become confused and, despite the perceived necessity of unifying different doctrines and orders, these ecumenical attempts hit a wall of irreconcilable differences (Yoon 1987, 205–6; Cha 2014, 59–60).

After the explosive segmentation in such a short period of time, the question can be legitimately asked whether a single “Jeungsanism” exists at all. Answering this question presupposes a difficult work of research. Collecting the primary sources of each order one by one, understanding the reasons for the emergence/schism of each group, and impartially researching the segmentation process are all challenging tasks. Their different objects of faith, doctrines, and cultivation practices took shape through long processes. Often, scholars have not been attentive enough to the complexity of these issues.

The most important studies conducted by scholars in the field of Korean religions since 1990s are: *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* (The Academy of Korean Studies 1991), *Encyclopedia of Korean Religious Culture* (The Institute of Korean Religion and Society 1991), *General Survey of Korean New Religions* (Yi 1992), *A Survey Report on Korean New Religions* (Research Group on Korean Religion 1996), *Rites and Proprieties of Korean Religions* (Ministry of

Culture and Sports 1996), *A Survey Study on Korean New Religions* (The Institute of Korean Religion and Society 1997), *The Idea of the Great Opening of Ethnic Religions and the Future of Korea* (The Association of Korean Native Religions 2004), *A Study on the Idea of the Great Opening in the Later World* (Kim 2004), *Religious Pluralism and Utopia in Modern East Asia* (Jang 2011), and *New Religions and the Idea of the Great Opening* (Yoon 2017).

A Survey Report on Korean New Religions (Research Group on Korean Religion 1996) is the most notable work. The project took four months to be completed, between August and November 1996, was conducted by the Korea Institute for Religion and Culture, and resulted in an official publication produced with the support of the South Korean Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism. One year after this material was published, Wonkwang University's Institute of Religions published *A Survey Study on Korean New Religions* (The Institute of Korean Religion and Society 1997), with the support of the same Ministry. The Ministry maintains an active interest in publishing surveys of Korean religions, but its most recent publications simply compile older sources and are not based on new empirical research.

Several recent descriptions of “Jeungsanism” are still based on *A Survey Report on Korean New Religions*, a book published 22 years ago. They invariably list, as the primary object of faith of “Jeungsanism,” Kang Jeungsan, the Supreme God who descended to Earth for the salvation of the world. Yet, in addition to Kang, other objects of faith in the Jeungsanist orders include Korean progenitor-gods such as Hwanin, Hwanwung, and Dangun, civilizational giants like Confucius, Buddha Shakyamuni, or Jesus, ancestral spirits, historical figures such as Choe Je-u, the Jesuit Catholic missionary to China, Matteo Ricci (1552–1810), and the Korean Buddhist monk Jin-Muk (진묵, 1562–1633), and the founders of the different religious orders themselves. In other words, a wide variety of religious figures appear as objects of worship at some level or another (Research Group on Korean Religion 1996, 143–44).

This is a very general description, similar to those that try to identify a *genus* Christianity encompassing the *species* Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodox Churches, and Protestantism. Obviously, there are common features, but it would be wrong to say that all Christians share the Catholic and Orthodox veneration of the Virgin Mary, since the Protestants don't. Similarly, the objects of faith and worship in the Jeungsanist religions also vary greatly. In general, they consider

Kang Jeungsan as the main object of worship, but how his figure is defined and perceived is not the same in the different orders. Some religious orders worship Hwanin, Hwanwung, Dangun, Choe Je-u, Matteo Ricci, or the Venerable Jinmuk, but in different combinations and ways. There are orders that venerate these figures partially, or fully, or not at all. Defining “Jeungsanism” *en bloc* is ultimately impossible (Cha 2014, 65–7).

Kang Jeungsan’s divine title raises another issue. *A Survey Report on Korean New Religions* claims that Kang Jeungsan is worshipped as the Jade Emperor or the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven (Research Group on Korean Religion 1996, 141). Nonetheless, according to a survey conducted by Hong Beom-Cho in the early 1980s, the divine titles attributed to Kang Jeungsan by various Jeungsanist branches include the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven, the Celestial Worthy of Universal Creation through His Thunderbolt, the Originator with Whom All Beings Resonate (九天應元雷聲普化天尊上帝, which may in fact be shortened as the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven), the Supreme God Presiding Over Heaven (統天上帝), the Jade Emperor (玉皇上帝), the Supreme God of the Nine Palaces, Heavenly Dao and Boundlessness (九宮天道無極上帝), Jeungsan Holy Lord the Supreme God (甌山聖王上帝), the Lord of Heaven (天主), and fifty-odd more (Hong 1982, 283–85). This problem is not unique to Jeungsanism, as evidenced by the different titles attributed to Jesus Christ in the various Christian traditions.

Similarly, problems are also found in the interpretation of Kang Jeungsan’s authority and work. For the Jeungsanists, the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth are the most crucial holy exercises that he performed for the benefit of the whole universe. Before undertaking those works, it is reported that Kang Jeungsan practiced Holy Works in the Daewon-sa (Great Court) Buddhist Temple, for 49 days, without eating or resting. The sacred works in Daewon-sa can be interpreted in two ways. First, it can be argued that in the temple Kang attained enlightenment through self-cultivation, and acquired the power needed to carry out the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth (Lee 1947, 93). The second interpretation is that at Daewon-sa he judged the divine beings to establish a foundation needed for carrying out the Reordering Works and opening the Dao of mutual beneficence (Park 2007, 88–107).

Both Jeungsangyo Headquarters and Jeung San Do maintain the former position, while Daesoon Jinrihoe affirms the latter. To be able to perform the

Reordering Works, one should be endowed with the supreme authority of presiding over Heaven and Earth. Whether this authority was given by Heaven to Kang Jeungsan as an answer to his petition, or was something innate to him, is a question that has profound theological implications. It defines the nature and scope of Kang Jeungsan's divinity. The positions of the different orders are not the same, and should be closely examined. However, current research often presents only the position of Jeungsangyo Headquarters and Jeung San Do, as if it was shared by all the different branches of Jeungsanism (Research Group on Korean Religion 1996, 140).

The description of cultivation methods may in turn become a source of controversy. For example, *Rites and Propriety of Korean Religions* (Ministry of Culture and Sports 1996, 434–36) presented the incantations that are chanted in some of the new religions derived from Kang Jeungsan, including the Tae-eul mantra and eleven others. Although reciting incantations is a key practice of all Jeungsanist religions, it varies from one religion to another in terms of the specific method of recitation and even the verses of the incantations themselves. Although incantations such as the Tae-eul mantra and the Wunjang mantra are shared by most groups, both the methods of recitation and the contents are not the same (Cha 2014, 68–71). Few studies seem to have understood these nuances.

Lastly, it is often argued that the system of thought of “Jeungsanism” is built on concepts such as the “mutual beneficence” or the “resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence,” yet, only roughly half of the Jeungsanist orders have adopted these ideas. Seondogyo, the first order founded by Goh Pan-Lye after Kang Jeungsan's death, did not include these ideas among its doctrines. Nor were they present in Kim Hyeong-Ryeol's Maitreya Buddhism. On the other hand, Daesoon Jinrihoe, Jeungsangyo Headquarters, and Jeung San Do have all accepted the ideas of “resolution of grievances,” “mutual beneficence,” or their combined formula, “resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence.” However, the three orders have different interpretations of these theories. It is incorrect to attribute these concepts to “Jeungsanism” as a whole, although few researchers only seem to have spotted the problem (Cha 2014, 72–87).

Western scholars are well aware of these difficulties. Jonathan Z. Smith (1938–2017), for example, argued that there is no single “Judaism,” but a plurality of “Judaisms,” including inter-testamental Judaism, post-biblical

Judaism, early and late Judaism, Hellenistic Judaism, and so on, while generalizations about a supposedly monolithic Judaism would distort the subject in a vain search for a sameness that never existed (Smith 2004, 20–2). Korean scholars noticed the same problems when trying to construct a single category of “Protestantism” (Oh 1990, 111), yet they failed to take these discussions into account when dealing with their own indigenous phenomena such as Jeungsanism. Most descriptions of Jeungsanist religions randomly draw bit and pieces from each order to build a supposedly general category, whose features are not found in any of the main organizations. It is true that primary sources are tedious, but it is also true that secondary sources are often inaccurate.

Problems with Jorgensen’s Article

The *Handbook of East Asian New Religious Movements* is a very valuable book. Most of its articles are accurate and informative. It reflects the point of view of scholars who know the respective languages and specialize in Japanese, Chinese, Vietnamese, or Korean religions, rather than engaging in a dialogue with international scholars of new religious movements (who normally do not speak nor read East Asian languages). It is, of course, a legitimate choice. However, we believe that the works of both categories of scholars should be considered when dealing with new religious movements. A Sinologist may have a perfect knowledge of the Chinese language, yet lack the comparative perspective and methodological experience in studying new religions and their opponents that scholars who have studied for years new religious movements and anti-cult opposition all over the world may offer. Conversely, the latter scholars need to dialogue with colleagues who understand the local languages and contexts.

The same discussion took place, years ago, in the field of art history. As it became more and more evident that new religious movements such as Theosophy and Spiritualism had a decisive influence on the birth of modernist art, art historians at first dismissed contributions by religious scholars who did not “speak the language” of art history. They realized later that cooperation was needed, since without a global and comparative approach to new religious and esoteric movements how exactly these groups influenced fathers of modernist art such as Wassily Kandinsky (1866–1944) or Piet Mondrian (1872–1944) could not really be assessed (Spretnak 2014; Introvigne 2016).

The article “Taesunjilhoe” in the *Handbook of East Asian New Religious Movements* largely relies on a text Jorgensen wrote at the beginning of our century (Jorgensen 2001). There is nothing wrong with it, and scholars frequently use their own previous articles as sources. However, one may legitimately wonder whether at least in parts of his article Jorgensen simply cut and pasted from his old article, without considering the literature published between 2001 and 2018. That the article was composed somewhat in haste is suggested by other details, too. There is a reference to “Kim 1980” (Jorgensen 2018a, 369), yet no text of an author whose last name is Kim published in 1980 is mentioned in the bibliography.

Some historical details do not appear to be supported by the sources. Jorgensen states that “Kang’s father participated in the [Donghak] rebellion.” He adds that Kang himself was involved in, or taught, “a progression of religions” going from Seohak (Western Learning, i.e. Catholicism) to Donghak, Namhak, or Southern Learning, taught by the famous Korean scholar of the *Jeong-yeok* (*The Corrected Book of Changes*, a revised Korean version of the Chinese classic *I Ching*), Kim Il-Bu (김일부, 1826–1898), and Bukhak (Northern Learning, Kang’s own teaching), and that Kang Jeungsan “was enlightened during a massive storm at a monastery on Mount Moak” (Jorgensen 2018a, 361).

These statements are presented as if they were obvious and uncontroversial in the historical research about Kang. But they are not. Most historians of Kang would agree that there is no solid evidence that his father actively participated in the Donghak uprising of 1894. That Kang was enlightened at a monastery on Mount Moak is reported by Jeung San Do but is not accepted by Daesoon Jinrihoe. The sequence Seohak-Donghak-Namhak-Bukhak is based on an account that is accepted only by the Five Regions Buddhism, another Korean new religion. Five Regions Buddhism was established by Kim Ch’i-in (김치인, 1855–1895), who claimed to be Maitreya himself. After he died in 1895, the order divided into several factions. Of this group, only a few people who live in South Chungcheong Province and study the *Jeong-yeok* remain in existence today. “Bukhak,” in their teachings, does not refer to the teachings of Kang Jeungsan but to the science and philosophy imported to Korea from Qing China.

Elsewhere, Jorgensen repeats slander coming from Daesoon Jinrihoe’s most bitter competitors, Jeungsangyo Headquarters and Jeung San Do. He reports that Jo Jeongsan “made Kang’s sister [Seondol, 선돌, ca. 1881–1942, although the

name is not supplied] his concubine” (Jorgensen 2018a, 363). The authors he quotes in turn derive this story from Jeungsangyo Headquarters sources, i.e. from controversial publications produced by a religious competitor. Indeed, the 1977 book *History of Jeungsangyo*, published by Jeungsangyo Headquarters and written by Lee Jeongnip, claimed that Kang’s sister was one of seven young women Jo Jeongsan took as concubines (Lee 1977, 143). Lee Jeongnip, however, was not a neutral historian. He was the second patriarch of Jeungsangyo Headquarters, an angry rival of Jo Jeongsan’s orders, with a vested interest in discrediting Jo’s sexual mores and claiming that the only “orthodox” Jeungsanist branches were those established by himself and his brother, Lee Sangho. Lee Jeongnip had started spreading rumors against Jo Jeongsan in 1936, trying to incite Japanese authorities to crack down on Mugeukdo, and continued ever since (Park 2013, 141–42).

Reliance on sources produced by rival religious orders (or derived by these) is also apparent in Jorgensen’s claims that Daesoon Jinrihoe devotees believe that Korea’s liberation from Japan (August 15, 1945) was achieved because on July 3, 1945 Jo Jeongsan’s followers performed a ritual, chanting the Tae-eul mantra and flapping blue and red flags, and that, after Japanese suppression, Jo “secretly revived his religion” in 1942 and changed its name from Mugeukdo to Taegeukdo (Jorgensen 2018a, 364), a change that in fact only occurred in 1950.

Admittedly, the history of Daesoon Jinrihoe underwent many ups and downs and internal disputes occurred many times. Two cases include the transition period from Taegeukdo to Daesoon Jinrihoe in 1968, and the internal controversies in the order in 1999 and beyond. The more recent divisions (and reconciliations) are not covered in Jorgensen’s article (while they are mentioned in both Korean- and English-speaking sources: see Introigne 2013).

When he deals with the accusations traded between the various factions at the time of the separation between Taegeukdo and Daesoon Jinrihoe, Jorgensen accuses Park Wudang of “leading a terror campaign,” immorality, “embezzlement,” and even possibly causing “the death of seventy-six members” and escaping prosecution for this and other crimes by paying “huge bribes” and “buying off the gendarmes [...] with massive quantities of gold” (Jorgensen 2018a, 365). Nobody was prosecuted or found guilty by a court of law for these supposed crimes, and one would expect that, in a scholarly work, such serious accusations against the respected founder of a million-member religion would be

made only if they were backed by unimpeachable evidence. However, the only source quoted by Jorgensen is *The Tragedy of Daesoon Jinrihoe*, a propaganda book published by CSD in 2000 (CSD 2000).

CSD is an abbreviation of Chŭngsando chŏn'guk ch'ŏngnyŏn sindo yŏnhaphoe, “The National Youth Association of Jeung San Do,” i.e. the youth movement of the arch-rival of Daesoon Jinrihoe among the Jeungsanist religions. This book is also used to reconstruct the events following the death of Park Wudang, with all developments after 2007, including the (partially successful) attempt at reconciling the different factions conveniently omitted. While, to attack Park Wudang, criticism by Taegeukdo is mentioned, another book published by the Jeung San Do's youth organization, *The True Colors of Daesoon Jinrihoe* (CSD 1996), is introduced to present the idea of “a pattern of alleged extortion, theft, embezzlement, and violence” (Jorgensen 2018a, 367), allegedly involving both Taegeukdo and Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Jorgensen himself report that “based on Pak's [Park Wudang's] explicit orders,” Daesoon Jinrihoe “claims to silently endure even the grossest of slurs made by its upstart arch-rival,” Jeung San Do, in accordance with the principle of “not creating new grievances,” resorting to prayer rather than to lawsuits (Jorgensen 2018a, 365). Others, however, reacted. Hong Beom-Cho, the third patriarch of Jeungsangyo Headquarters, was not a friend of Daesoon Jinrihoe, but denounced Jeung San Do's book *The True Colors of Daesoon Jinrihoe* as “entirely baseless and falsified” (Hong 1991, 31–7).

Disputes among rival religious organizations are often bitter, and unfounded accusations are common. Jeung San Do itself has filed lawsuits, including in the United States, to protest accusations (coming from groups other than Daesoon Jinrihoe) of violence and involvement in the murder of Hong Beom-Cho and his wife (Jeungsando of America and Myung Sun Yoo 2014). Our main criticism of Jorgensen is, however, methodological. No scholar of new religious movements would publish an article about the Jehovah's Witnesses using the Catholic or Evangelical apologetic booklets against them as serious sources. These booklets may be studied as examples of how the criticism of “cults” operates, but are certainly not sources for studying the Jehovah's Witnesses.

Another problem with Jorgensen is that, at times, he also uses what he calls himself Jeung San Do's “heresiography” (Jorgensen 2018a, 366) for

reconstructing the doctrine of Daesoon Jinrihoe. He also uses Korean secondary sources, whose problems we have identified above. For example, he writes that Jo Jeongsan “is said to be Okhwang Sangje [the Jade Emperor]. Together with Kang Il-Sun [Kang Jeungsan] as Kuch’ön Sangye, they form ‘two divinities in one substance’ [...]. They were incarnated in Korea, but they are both still in command of the three realms” of heaven, Earth, and humankind (Jorgensen 2018a, 368). Jorgensen maintains that originally it was Kang Jeungsan who was identified with the Jade Emperor, but when Jo Jeongsan assumed this position Kang “retreated as a *deus otiosus*” (Jorgensen 2018, 364). He quotes the *General Survey of Korean Religions* (Yi 1992, 590) rather than primary Daesoon Jinrihoe sources. It would have been easy for Jorgensen to ascertain that Korean scholars such as Kang Don-Ku, Yoon Yong-Bok, and Ko Byong-Chul all suggested different interpretations (Ko 2007, 194–95; Kang 2011b, 246–47; Yoon 2013, 17–8).

We do not dispute that Daesoon Jinrihoe venerates Kang Jeungsan as the Lord of the Ninth Heaven and Jo Jeongsan as the Jade Emperor. But they do not enjoy the same divine status and are not “two divinities in one substance.” There is only one Supreme God, Kang Jeungsan Sangje. In a way, it can be said that both Kang Jeungsan and Jo Jeongsan “rule” the Three Realms, but only Kang Jeungsan as the Supreme God of the Ninth Heaven “presides” over the Three Realms (Daesoon Jinrihoe 2010, 98, 266, 271 and 314). These are by no means minor matters, as they involve the fundamental notion of God in Daesoon Jinrihoe, and should have been checked through the primary sources, rather than relying on faulty general surveys of Korean new religions.

Conclusion

Summing up, the problem we find in Jorgensen’s article is that it largely relies either on sources produced by the most aggressive competitors of Daesoon Jinrihoe, Jeungsangyo Headquarters and Jeung San Do, or on Korean compilations that are in themselves problematic.

This is not a problem of the *Handbook of East Asian New Religious Movements* in general, nor of his section on Korea. The latter covers seven Korean new religions, Donghak (Ch’öndogyo), Daejonggyo (Taejonggyo), Won Buddhism (Wönbulgyo), the Unification Movement, the Yoido Full Gospel

Church (Yöüido Sunbogŭm Kyohoe), Dahn World (Tan Wöltü), and Daesoon Jinrihoe. In the other articles, we found a balanced use of primary and secondary sources, with a prevalence of primary sources published by each religious order. It is not even a problem of Jorgensen, as his second article published in the *Handbook*, about Daejonggyo (Jorgensen 2018b), relies mostly on primary sources. The editors put together an impressive collection of good articles. Our only criticism is their use of movements' names different from the ones they use themselves in the West, including "Taesunjillihoe" for Daesoon Jinrihoe. Coherence in the transliterations is important, but perhaps not at the expenses of understandability for the average English-speaking reader.

In the article on Daesoon Jinrihoe, Jorgensen did quote some primary sources, such as the 1969 *Introduction to Daesoon Jinrihoe* (Daesoon Jinrihoe 1969) and the 1974 edition of its sacred scripture (Daesoon Jinrihoe 1974). However, since some passages he quotes are also quoted in *A Comprehensive Survey of Korean Religion* and Lee Kang-Oh's *Catalog of Korean New Religions* (Lee 1992), a book with a clear bias against new religions in general, we can ask the question whether he really worked with primary sources directly.

The fact that he also largely ignores the more recent material (including Daesoon Academy of Sciences 2016; Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture 2010, 2014) leaves, again, the impression that Jorgensen largely recycled his 2001 article, adding a short section on "Recent Developments," and this even though a large amount of new materials would have been easily available, including online. As a result, his text of 2018 has the same problems of the one he published in 2001, the most serious of which is its reliance on literature produced by competitors and rivals of Daesoon Jinrihoe, particularly Jeung San Do.

There are several quotes from the 2003 version of *Tojŏn*, which is a main source of the article. This is the main sacred scripture of Jeung San Do, although the choice (possibly by the editors) to impose their own transliterations, and to ignore English language materials published by the orders themselves, led Jorgensen to ignore the 2016 English edition of this book, and the fact that Jeung San Do calls it *Dojeon* for the benefit of its Western audience (Jeung San Do 2016).

It would have been perfectly appropriate to use Jeung San Do's books in an article discussing the beliefs of this new religion. However, the article is about Daesoon Jinrihoe. It is often unclear whether what Jorgensen takes from the Jeung San Do scripture is presented as historical fact or a statement of doctrine. For example, Jorgensen attributes to Kang Jeungsan the teaching that in the Latter Word humans would live for 800 years (Jorgensen 2018a, 369), citing the 2003 Jeungsando's *Dojeon* and the usual *General Survey of Korean New Religions*, which attributes to "Jeungsanism" in general what are in fact peculiar doctrines of Jeung San Do.

In fact, Jeung San Do now teaches, based on words attributed to Goh Pan-Lye, that "in the Latter Heaven's Paradise of Immortality, people of great longevity will live twelve hundred years, those of middling longevity will live nine hundred years, and those of meager longevity will leave seven hundred years" (Jeung San Do 2016, 991: *Dojeon* 11:207, 3). Be it as it may be, these teachings are not found in Daesoon Jinrihoe.

Academics discuss, in Korea and in the West, the deontological point whether a scholarly study of a religious movement should be submitted to the movement itself before publication, not for approval or censorship but for a dialogue in which facts can be checked and the group can be allowed to respond to allegations coming from hostile sources (Lee 2018, 132).

Norwegian historian William Brede Kristensen (1867–1953) insisted that, when the description of a religion differs from the assessments of its actual devotees, such portrayal is not a description of the religion but simply represents the scholar's state of mind and feelings (Kristensen 1955, 22). Ninian Smart (1927–2001) claimed that understanding other religions calls for sympathy and approaching them with an open mind. He quoted from a Native American proverb, "Never judge a person until you have walked a mile in her moccasins" (Smart 1989, 10).

The traditional model of study of the Korean new religions can be criticized as the sort of armchair anthropology that was common in bygone ages. Today, it would be inconceivable for a scholar of new religious movements to research them without interviewing their actual members (as well, of course, as examining the claims of their critics).

Daesoon Jinrihoe is not a secretive organization. It welcomes scholars from all over the world to its two research departments, the Daesoon Institute of Religion and Culture and the Department of Academic Affairs, and to the Daesoon Academy of Sciences, which is affiliated with Daejin University, a university founded by the order and which organizes a yearly scholarly conference, the World SangSaeng Forum, where most presenters are not members of Daesoon Jinrihoe. Each of these institutes, and the religious order itself, maintains extensive Web sites. Certainly, a good scholarly methodology would compare these primary sources with secondary sources and criticism. On the other hand, ignoring the primary sources and relying mostly on hostile accounts by rival religionists, and outdated studies produced decades ago, cannot but lead to serious mistakes.

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