

Article

Aspects of Korean Folk Daoism in the 19th century*

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Introduction

Horace Grant Underwood described his perspective on 19th century Korea as a visiting protestant missionary. The following quote shows his impression of the country:

The people lay under the sway of superstitions of all sorts. Sorcerers controlled the doings of every household, were called in at births, sickness and deaths or in making any important decision. In fact they ruled the land, even the rulers themselves, with absolute and unquestionable power. Superstitions, fear of ghosts, goblins, and spirits of angry ancestors, all sorts of unseen terrors filled the minds not only of the lowly and the women, but even many of the highest and proudest of the people. (Underwood 1918, 41)

It is clear from this description that one of the most striking aspects of Korean society for Underwood was what he perceived as rampant superstitions in all levels of the society. These descriptions are also confirmed in many sources written by other missionaries. Isabella Lucy Bird Bishop, a famous traveler in the 19th century describes the situation in *Korea and Her Neighbor* as follows:

There is no national religion. Confucianism is the official cult, and the teachings of Confucius are the rule of Korean morality. Buddhism, once powerful, but “disestablished” three centuries ago, is to be met with chiefly in mountainous districts, and far from the main roads. Spirit worship, a species of shamanism, prevails all over the kingdom, and holds the uneducated masses and the women of all classes in complete bondage. (Bishop 1898, 21)

Her view of the Joseon dynasty (1392-1910)¹ as being close to barbarism in the 19th century was not only reflected in the views held by numerous missionaries in the late Joseon dynasty, but such view also arguably persists to this day. These descriptions show how Joseon people, including the aristocratic class,

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1. Joseon dynasty was built based on new Confucianism by Lee Seonggye 李成桂 (1335-1408).

were founded upon Spirit worship, which was also called shamanism at that time. However, this raises the question of whether Joseon society in the 19th century can be characterized only as barbarism or Shamanism. Noja Park, a researcher in Korean studies, indicates in *Presian News* that the majority of western missionaries who came to Korea in the 19th century belonged to higher classes of American and British society in which practices of extreme racism and imperialism were prevalent (April 2, 2004). Park's aim is to critique those views that were widely held by the missionaries and diplomats of the 19th century. Approaches like those of Park, which have focused on "imperialism" and "racism," form just one version for comprehending Joseon in the 19th century. On the other hand, the Joseon atmosphere of the 19th century is perhaps better understood in the context of folk Daoism which was prevalent at that time. This form of interpretation is characterized by an internal, reflective approach, and interpreting aspects and characteristics of folk Daoism and looking at how folk Daoism progressed in the 19th century during the Joseon society. Although primary materials and studies related to folk Daoism is scarce,² this article will be a first step in exploring the general characteristics of folk Daoism in the 19th century and assessing how it was conditioned by the social climate of the period

Aspects of Joseon Daoism prior to the 19th century: *Gwau* Daoism, *Naedan* Daoism, and Folk Daoism

This chapter examines the general characteristics of Korean Daoism and then provides concrete explanation of Korean folk Daoism in the 19th century. In the Joseon dynasty, two aspects of Daoism existed: *gwau* (ritualistic) Daoism 科儀道教 and *naedan* (internal alchemy) Daoism 內丹道教. *Gwau* Daoism has elements of Daoism that focuses on the ritual ceremonies of people praying to God for mercy and to expel misfortunes. In terms of *gwau* Daoism of Joseon, the Daoist gods defined as the being of worship can be divided into two groups. One is the *sogyokseo* 昭格署³ that worshiped for Laozi 老子, the Jade Emperor,

2. Confucianism, which was the dominant ideology of Joseon, occupied the largest portion among Korean studies related to Korean religions. Studies related to Joseon Daoism have been relatively lacking.

3. It was one of the government offices that was sacrificed in the *sinseon* (*shénxiān* in Chinese 神仙) and

etc., under the influence of the Chinese Daoism, and the other is the worship for the national gods such as the kings of the founding countries—Dangun 檀君, Gija 箕子, King Dongmyeong 東明王—among which the representative temple is Dangunseo 檀君署. One of the characteristics of Korean *gwauui* Daoism is the act of worshipping and praying to an ethnic God, i.e., Dangun. Since the Goryeo dynasty (918-1392), the ritual ceremonies of Sogyekseo 昭格署 and Dangunseo 檀君署 had been separated. Despite the discussion on whether to abolish Sogyekseo in the early Joseon dynasty (1392), the ancestral ceremony for Dangun had been continuing.⁴ Furthermore, when an epidemic broke out in Hwanghae province in 1452, the majority of people who lived in the area firmly believed that the epidemic occurred because the government moved the shrine of Dangun from Hwanghae province to the Pyongyang area.

This example proves that Dangun belief was largely influential in the folk culture.⁵ According to current studies, this worship seemed to grow in popularity whenever ethnic crisis happens, for instance, in times such as the Mongolian invasion in 1231 or the invasion of Japan in 1592. Korean folk Daoism has thus established itself firmly in a territorial and religious space inherited from the past.

On the other hand, *naedan* Daoism is characterized by exercises which aim to train oneself spiritually with cosmic energy through respiration focusing on the body. By undertaking spiritual journeys and improving one's health, the ultimate goal is to extend one's life, ideally to the point of achieving immortality. This indicates that a method of cultivation such as fostering cosmic energy embodies Daoist ideologies. In fact, Neo-Confucianism was the dominant institutionalized ideology throughout the Joseon dynasty. Generally, studies on

gods of the stars under the influence of Daoism in the Joseon dynasty. Despite the fact that there are few records of folk Daoism in the Joseon dynasty, the best book described gods of Sogyekseo in *Yongjaechonghwa* (*Stories Collected by Yongjae* 慵齋叢話). In vol. 2 of the book, gods of Sogyekseo are explained as follows: "In Taeljeon 太一殿 of Sogyekseo, the gods of Big Dipper 北斗七星 was worshiped, and in Sanchungjeon 三清殿 of Sogyekseo, the Jade Emperor and Laozi was worshiped. In addition, according to the records of *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty* 朝鮮王朝實錄 (1511 [17th year of Jungjong's 中宗 reign]), Laozi is described as the highest god in the Sogyekseo.

4. *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, 1392 (1st year of Taejo's 太祖 reign).

5. There are also records that when the Chinese ambassadors come to Joseon, they first greet god of Dangun at the shrine (*The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, March 9, 1488 [19th year of Seongjong's reign]; March 4, 1537 [32nd year of Jungjong's reign]). As well as, there are also detailed records of the location of Dangun shrine (*Sejongsillogiliji* 世宗實錄地理志, vol. 152).

Daoism of the Joseon dynasty take two different approaches: one is *beokdobul* (denouncing Buddhism and Daoism 闢道佛) and the other is *iyuseongno* (understanding the Daodejing [or Daoism] from a Confucian perspective 以儒釋老) (Kim 2013, 30). The former demonstrates the heretical status that Daoism possessed in the Joseon dynasty, while the latter demonstrates the limited academic evaluation of Daoism. Thus, Neo-Confucians understood and considered Daoism to be “black magic” (*sasul* 邪術) that abandoned “ethical” awareness and only pursued “longevity” (ibid.). Despite the biased understanding of Daoism in Joseon dynasty, many Confucians who had an interest in Daoist meditation tried to practice forms of cultivation, including a method of respiration called *naedan* Daoism, in order to obtain longevity and become sages (Kim 2013).

The folk Daoism is generally defined by the fact that it was prevalent at the common level. For example, the so-called Big Dipper belief, Kitchen god (Chowang 竈王) belief, and Dangun belief were all preserved in Joseon society and were very popular among all social classes, whereas the Guanyoo 關帝 belief was one of the forms of folk Daoism that started at the national level at the behest of the royal family of Joseon, according to the request of the Ming dynasty after the Japanese Invasion in 1592. However, the Guanyoo belief subsequently became the most popular one in Joseon society. Therefore, the meaning of “folk” in “folk Daoism” will be perceived as “popular belief” in this research.

Subsequently, unique popular beliefs which had a Daoist religious quality, such as the Big Dipper belief, Chowang belief, Dangun belief, Guanwoo belief, and Daoists’ thoughts on philosophy explored various issues and developed in a mixed form. Since then, most new religions formed in the late Joseon dynasty and the Japanese colonial period was based on the influence of folk Daoism from the 19th century. An example of such a religion is Donghak 東學, established in 1860, which was an ethno-national faith aimed at defending the country against imperialist powers and stabilizing people’s livelihoods 保國安民 through “belief in God” 侍天主. One of the characteristics of these religions is that they appeared in the ethnic crises of the latter era of the Joseon dynasty. These new religions are usually discussed in connection with the origins of Korean Daoism and are identified as “our unique ethno-national faith.” Indeed, in terms of nationalism, the ethnic element of the ethno-national faith is referred to as a nation which was made for political purposes through an all-

encompassing propaganda campaign designed to boost national power on the basis of social Darwinism. However, in a colonial country such as Joseon, the term “ethnic” is used to refer to the idea of “resistance” against imperialism in the Japanese colonial period.⁶

The development of ethno-national faith in the 19th and 20th centuries should be seen as serving to form close ties with folk Daoism, as exemplified in its common characteristics: such as the worship of Dangun or Guanwoo and the importance of the talisman in ethno-national faith and folk Daoism. Therefore, in this article, I examine the different aspects of folk Daoism, which are divided into three beliefs: the Guanwoo belief, the Seoneumjeul 善陰鷲 belief, and the Musangdan 無相壇 belief, all of which were prevalent in the 19th century

Aspects of Guanwoo belief, Myoryeonsa, and Musangdan

Guanwoo Belief

As mentioned above, an expansion of Guanwoo belief is a characteristic of folk Daoism in the 19th century. Guanwoo (Guan Yu in Chinese, ?-220) was a general in the Three Kingdoms period after the collapse of the Han dynasty. He played a significant role in the civil war, symbolizing loyalty and righteousness. After his death, he became a well-known historical figure throughout East Asia and his true life story was mythologized in fiction, such as in the novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, written by Luo Guanzhong 羅貫中 (1320-1400) in the Ming era. After that time, the popularity of Guanwoo became more prevalent, and it became a part of the belief system of Chinese folk Daoism. It was transmitted to the Korean peninsula at the request of the Ming dynasty and quickly spread across Joseon. Why, then, did the Ming dynasty make a request to build for the Guanwoo shrines in the late of the 16th century?⁷ The Ming dynasty dispatched 50,000 soldiers to Joseon to intercept the Japanese

6. *Minjok* 民族 has been translated as “nation,” “people,” “ethnic group,” “race,” “race-nation,” and *minjokju* 民族主義 has been translated as “nationalism” in the early of the 20th century of east Asian countries.

7. *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, 1598 (31st year of Seonjo’s 宣祖 reign).

military during the Japanese invasion of Korea (1592-1599); they believed that Guanwoo belief would help raise the morale of the military, as Guanwoo symbolizes good fortune or victory. From that time on, Guanwoo belief became deeply rooted in Joseon society, and it came to be used as an object of worship by the people in everyday life as a means to work out their concerns. In Joseon society, Guanwoo became a symbol of fortune, and even featured as the main character or hero in novels based on the Japanese invasion in 1592.⁸ According to *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, there were several incidents in which the government of Joseon prohibited ordinary people from paying their respects at the shrine to Guanwoo because the number of worshipers had become excessive.⁹ From 1592 to 1902, many shrines to Guanwoo had been built around Joseon by order of the kings, and new legends were created linking Guanwoo with ordinary people. According to these examples, Guanwoo belief was prevalent in Joseon society, as a symbol of worship to expel misfortunes and bring good luck. In the new religion of the 20th century, Guanwoo belief changed its meaning to becoming a protector for participants who meditated.¹⁰ Additionally, Seoneumjeulgyo 善陰鷲教 and Musangdan 無相壇, the first voluntary religious communities of folk Daoism which will be discussed in the next chapter, were based on Guanwoo belief. These points show Guanwoo belief to be a systemized part of Korean folk Daoism, the new religion of the 20th century, which was based on the immense influence which Guanwoo belief of the 19th century. This, therefore, calls for an explanation as to why Guanwoo belief was so popular in the late Joseon society.

The main reason is that Guanwoo belief and Confucianism were connected to one another. According to Guanwoo's biography, he was deeply loyal 忠 to Liu Bei 劉備, the founder of Shu-han. The importance of loyalty fitted with Joseon society, which was organized upon the values of Confucianism. For example, an incident that revealed the loyalty of Guanwoo

8. A representative novel in which Guanwoo plays the main heroic role is *Imjinlok* 壬辰錄. In this novel, Guanwoo is described as a god in order to give high praise to ordinary people for saving Joseon in the Japanese invasion.

9. *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, 1961 (17th year of Sukjong's 肅宗 reign).

10. That Guanwoo belief has contributed to the formation of new religion can be confirmed on the basis of the case that Guanwoo is one of the major gods in Jeungsangyo 甌山教, a representative neo-religion in 20th century. Besides, *Daesunjeongyeong* 大巡典經, scriptures of Jeungsangyo demonstrated that Guanwoo was the god who helped Kang Jeungsan, a religious leader as founder of Jeungsangyo, and serving Guanwoo became a disciple of Kang Jeungsan (Lee 1929).

was recorded in *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty* in 1814: “There were rebels who resisted against Ching 清 dynasty; they were suppressed by the power of Guanwoo, since then, Ching dynasty decided to hold great sacrificial rites for Guanwoo two times a year.”¹¹ This symbolic description shows how Guanwoo preserved the safety of the Kingdom in Joseon society. Therefore, the principal characteristic of Guanwoo belief is that kings as well as nobles who were neo-Confucians had been actively involved in the Guanwoo belief for several hundred years. Furthermore, Park Gusu (1807-1876), who was a director of Kyujanggak (Imperial Library 奎章閣), left a record relevant to Guanwoo belief: “I have been adoring Guanwoo for 20 years, sometimes I have been taught by Guanwoo whenever I meet him in my dreams.”¹² Moreover, Kim Changhee, a scholar and a neo-Confucian, declared: “Guanwoo is an ancestor of Confucianism.”¹³ If we consider the dominant ideological system under which Daoists are denounced as heretics and even received death threats in the early Joseon dynasty, we can see how these sentiments and expressions were innovative in the late Joseon dynasty. These examples mean that although Joseon was a neo-Confucian society, folk Daoism had a wider reach and influence as well as a more liberal position in the religious climate than has previously been thought.

Seoneumjeulgyo: The Interaction between Three Religions

One important factor to consider in regards to Korean folk Daoism in the 19th century is the context in which the initial communities of folk Daoism appeared. Prior to the 19th century, there was no denomination with religious association in Joseon. Lee Neunghwa (2000, 303) is on the record for stating the following in *The History of Joseon Daoism*. Lee refers to Seoneumjeulgyo, which imitated the Chinese Bailianshe 白蓮社, and which advocated the practice of reciting the name of Amitābha Bodhisattva in order to attain rebirth in heaven, the western pure land of Sukhāvātī. He also mentions that a book, *Jejunggamno*

11. *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty*, 1814 (14th year of Soonjo's 純祖 reign).

12. Preface 序文 of *Gwanseong jaegun seongjeok doji jeonjip* 關聖帝君聖蹟圖誌全集 [The Complete Works of Guanyu], (Seoul: Dangukyeonseongjeon 檀國顯聖典, 1876).

13. Epilogue of *Gwanseong jaegun seongjeok doji jeonjip* 關聖帝君聖蹟圖誌全集 [The Complete Works of Guanyu], (Seoul: Dangukyeonseongjeon 檀國顯聖典, 1876).

濟衆甘露, which came from the religious community, Seoneumjeulgyo, had a divine introduction written by Lu Dongbin 呂洞賓, the representative Daoist in the Tang dynasty. In the late 19th century, the communities of Korean folk Daoism were mysterious because of their qualities and theories, which were drawn from and mixed with those of Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. For example, the meaning of Seoneumjeulgyo comes not only from *Shujing* 書經 which is a Confucian sacred text but also from a morality book 善書 in folk Daoism. Seoneumjeul means “there is no knowing how the heaven helps people and makes them be in harmony with one another 善陰鷲,” which demonstrates a view helpful in understanding heaven or God in Confucianism. It means that heaven or God controls all things in harmony and benevolence, and majority of political processes are just natural, and not artificial, oppressive, or overbearing. In Confucianism, great kings pursue benevolent policies, not overbearing ones. Therefore, it is often said that most people cannot really see political power, even if they are under a king. If a religious community prefers the values of Seoneumjeul, it can be seen to have a Confucian intention, including the realization of Confucian values.

However, in terms of religious practice, Seoneumjeul’s method was the reciting of the name of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, and according to the context of the *Jejunggamno* 濟衆甘露, it had a theory based on the importance of Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva and the “mercy” of Buddhism. In addition, it emphasized practical behavior in real society through learning the practices of Bodhisattva in Mahayana Buddhism. As mentioned above, Seoneumjeulgyo seems to have a practical intention for Confucian ideality and a Buddhist practice based on Mahayana Buddhism simultaneously. Then, how could Lee Neunghwa deal with this religion in terms of Daoism in *The History of Joseon Daoism*? The essential view of Seoneumjeulgyo appears to be as follows:

In November 1872, several monks and ascetics belonging to the Myoryeon community—called Seoneumjeulgyo—gathered in the Ganro temple in the Samgak mountain and had a Buddhist ceremony to achieve a powerful concentration of religious ecstasy for them. When they were repeating the name of the Amitābha Bodhisattva continuously, suddenly Amitābha Bodhisattva appeared and a divine spirit entered into their bodies (*gameung*

感應) and immediately preached a teaching.¹⁴

This means that there were divine revelations uttered by God, who was Amitābha Bodhisattva. According to this book, these processes even repeated 11 times over 3 years; *Jejunggamno* 濟衆甘露 was published in 1877. In this paragraph, “A divine spirit entered” serves to emphasize *gangpil* (spirit-writing 降筆) for making scriptures by receiving divine revelations from Gods. The requirements for *gameung*, which is unity with the Gods, bore a very strong relation to late Joseon folk religions. *Gangpil* means a state of religious ecstasy; in other words, “writing Gods’ words” whilst being united with them. “Ecstasy” was the technique used by shamans who cured diseases and changed souls. Thus, the word of *gangpil* repeatedly appears in *Jejunggamno*.

If there is *gameung*, which is unity with God to follow the rule of *cause and effect* 因緣 as karma, you can realize the mysterious rule controlled this world. If you are on the *gameung*, you can also be bright in your mind. Merely, I really wish you take appreciative eyes and keep it in your mind, and furthermore, try to make constant efforts; then your *gameung* which united with God can enter into the perfect status as spiritual concentration. As well as this, you can help Bodhisattva’s worries which should lead unrealized people to Nirvana. In the temple of Musangdan, Lu Dongbin wrote in the time of binan (*feiluan* in Chinese 飛鸞).¹⁵

According to Lee Neunghwa’s records, the practice of Seoneumjeulgyo could be used to reach a state of unity with Gods through the performance of prayer and reciting spells for systemizing doctrines through Gods’ revelations. This method of “telepathy with Gods” by means of the “performance of spells” and ecstasy, as opposed to difficult theory learning, could easily be spread to civilians. This is why both *gameung* and *gangpil* are representative characteristics of folk Daosim. Although Seoneumjeulgyo reveals Buddhist practices such as the reciting of the name of Amitābha Bodhisattva, it can be dealt with like Daoism. Also, in the last sentence of the above quote, a Daoist, Lu Dongbin states the theory of Buddhism. These books, which were made by the divine revelations, have a common main subject, namely *gwonseonjingak* (encouraging good and punishing evil 勸善懲惡), which is based on Confucian ideology

14. Preface of *Jejunggamro* 濟衆甘露, 1877.

15. Preface of *Guanseyunbosal myoenungsihyun jejunggamro* 觀世音菩薩妙應示現濟衆甘露, 1877.

and Buddhist theory. The religious ceremony and the main subject of the books concentrate on building a better society or country, not on an individual fortune. The interaction between Daoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism had a large influence on the formation of the theory of new religion in the late 19th century.

Musangdan

Musangdan, which was based on the ritual ceremony of folk Daoism, appeared in this period. It has been seen as the first stage in the development and organization of folk Daoism in the history of Joseon Daoism. This religious community was formed on the basis of the theories of the three religions: Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism. An interesting characteristic of Musangdan is that the majority of books of folk Daoism in the 19th century were issued by Musangdan, which worships three Gods, Samsenonjegu 三聖諸君—Gwanseongjegun (Guanshengdijun in Chinese) 關聖帝君, Munchangjegun 文昌帝君, and Buwujegun 孚佑帝君. These books were seen as divine revelations uttered by Gods. Maurice Courant (1865-1935) credits Musangdan with the introduction of Korean Daoist scriptures in his book, *Bibliographie Coreenne* which was a first bibliography, written from a foreigner's point of view. Maurice Courant classified Daoist scriptures in the Joseon dynasty into three parts: 1) Sacred books, 2) Worship of Gwanseongjegun, Munchangjegun, and Buwujegun, and 3) Various works. Through this categorization, it can be seen that the belief in three Gods, Gwanseongjegun, Munchangjegun, and Buwujegun, was widely prevalent in the Joseon dynasty in the late 19th century. The following book, *Munchang jegun mongsu bijanggyeong* (*The Teachings of Munchangjegun in Dreams* 文昌帝君夢授秘藏經), is a characteristic text of Musangdan: "Munchangjegun leaves this book to two disciples, namely, Cheongheo and Cheongha, because he is happy to accept them as disciples. The names of the book's chapters are those of the disciples. Some of these disciples have religious positions in Musangdan" (Coreenne, 1896: 3, 174-75). According to *Bibliographie Coreenne* (1896) by Maurice Courant, the organization included the names of disciples and the status of Musangdan. Particularly, bibliographic contents of *Munchang jegun mongsu bijanggyeong* described members as disciples in Musangdan. Maurice Courant understands that it is not only a divine book uttered by Munchangjegun

(Wenchangdijun in Chinese), who is known as the God of culture and literature and physically represented by a constellation of six stars near the Big Dipper, but it also consists of a new sacred book of Munchangjegun by the community of Musangdan (Wang 2002). Yu un 劉雲, a member of Musangdan, wrote an epilogue to the book as follows: “The names of chapters are metaphors for the eight disciples.”

Among the eight disciples of the Daoists, Seo Nangyeong 徐蘭瓊¹⁶ was “remade” as “Musangdan” in 1883, focusing on the belief in the Jade Emperor who possessed the Korean characteristic of belief that the status of God is more popular and absolute compared to the Chinese Jade Emperor. In his article related to the organization of Musangdan, Yunsoo Kim insisted that Choi Sunghwan 崔瑄煥 (1876-1883), who played a main role as the main Daoist of Musangdan 無相壇, was official Daoist belonging to Guanwoo belief. However, further studies regarding the concrete religious theories and detailed organizations are required (Kim 2007).

This was the starting point of a new religion in the 19th century, just like Jeungsangyo, a new religion of the 20th century which believes that Kang Jeungsan was a founder who was reborn from the Jade Emperor. Musangdan plays a significant role in the development of the belief in the Jade Emperor and also in the publishing of Daoist scriptures. The 19th century’s Musangdan was not imported from the Chinese Daoist scriptures, but was published in the Joseon Daoist scriptures through *gangpil*: the recording of divine revelations uttered by the Gods.

Conclusion

This article examined how folk Daoism of the 19th century developed from three religious organizations: The Guanwoo belief, Seoneumjeulgyo, and Musangdan. In the case of the Guanwoo belief, while the substance of worship is focused on a Daoist God, the social value of Guanwoo belief is based on loyalty and the righteousness of Confucianism. For Seoneumjeulgyo, the main points of worship involve Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva and Lu Dongbin, a Daoist, and a

16. According to *The Annals of the Joseon Dynasty* (August 27, 1883 [20th year of Gojong’s 高宗 reign]), it seems that he was a soldier of the middle class and a Daoist in Gwanje shrine 關帝廟.

social value based on the mercy of Buddhism. It also describes the characteristics of these organizations in the 19th century in the Joseon dynasty. As a result, the characteristics of folk Daoism will be divided into three branches: expansion of the worship of Guanwoo, the importance of *gangpil* and *gameung*, and the publication of Daoist books through the religious organization Musangdan.

The first factor is the expansion of the worship of Guanwoo belief. It was systemized by the Joseon government and became popular in the 19th century. Among the new religions of Joseon in the 20th century, the religion which succeeded the most among the various Guanwoo beliefs was Jeungsangyo. A religious sect leader of Jeungsangyo even made a new spell relevant to Guanwoo. One of the characteristics of the Guanwoo belief is that it protects believers and defends Korea against imperialistic powers such as Japan. These points describe Guanwoo belief as being a systemized part of Korean folk Daoism and the new religions of the 20th century, which were formed by the immense influence that the Guanwoo belief exerted in the 19th century.

The second factor is the importance of *gangpil* and *gameung*. This method of *gangpil* (telepathy with Gods) by means of the “performance of spells” and ecstasy, as opposed to difficult theoretical learning, could easily be spread to civilians. These books, which were made by the divine revelations, have a common main subject: *gwonseonjingak* is based on Confucian ideology and Buddhist theory. The religious ceremony and the main subject of the book concentrate on the formation of a better society or country, not working towards an individual fortune.

The third factor was the publication of a wide range of Daoist scriptures in the late Joseon dynasty. Folk Daoism scriptures can be largely divided into books of revelation, called *Nanseo* 鸞書, composed by means of receiving Gods’ revelations, and books of morals which included moral ideologies for society, known as *Seonso* 善書.

The discussion of the origin of new religions in the 20th century has hitherto focused on the interaction between Confucianism, Buddhism, Daoism, and Christianity. I argue, however that it is folk Daoism rather than these other religions that had the major influence on the formation of broad range of religions from diverse religious backgrounds. For example, new religions required an enhanced racial consciousness and expanded national identity in order to succeed in promoting belief in the ethnic God, Dangun. Among the ethno-national faiths, the representative example is Daejongyo 大倥教, which

was active in the resistance movement against Japan based in Manchuria in the period of the Japanese colonial rule.

New religions, which can be seen as ethno-national faith, made Guanwoo a major God and actively accepted spells and talismans. These characteristics imply that new religions should receive attention as a continuation of folk Daoism in the late Joseon dynasty, not as a fundamentally new type of religion which suddenly appeared. The origins of new religions in the latter era of the Joseon dynasty can be found in folk Daoism. The new religions continued to develop over the latter part of the Joseon dynasty and into the early 20th century, and their folk Daoist heritage also continued to exert a great influence on the ideological and ritualistic composition of each new religion.

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Abstract

This article examines how the Korean Daoism of the 19th century developed from three religious organizations: Three key elements will be examined in this study: the expansion of the worship of Guanwoo, the importance of *gangpil* and *gameung*, and the publication of Daoist books through the religious organization Musangdan. This article will firstly examine how Guanwoo belief was systemized by the Joseon government and show its prevalence in the 19th century. It will secondly call attention to the importance of *gangpil* and *gameung*. Thirdly, it will look at the publication of a wide range of Daoist scriptures in the Joseon dynasty. In the 20th century, new Korean religions required a heightened racial consciousness and a stronger national identity. Among the new religions, “Daejongyo,” which was active in the resistance movement against Japan in Manchuria during the period of Japanese colonial rule, is a representative example. New religions, namely, ethno-national faiths, made Guanwoo the major God and actively accepted the use of spells and talismans. These characteristics imply that new religions should receive attention as a continuation of folk Daoism in the late Joseon dynasty (1392-1910), and not as a new type of religion which suddenly appeared. The origins of new religions in the latter era of the Joseon dynasty can be found in folk Daoism. They then continued to develop over the latter part of the Joseon dynasty and the early 20th century, while their folk Daoist heritage also continued to exert a great effect on the ideological and ritualistic composition of each new religion.

Keywords: folk Daoism, Confucianism, Buddhism, Guanwoo belief, Seoneumjeulgyo, Musangdan, Joseon dynasty