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**David W. Kim, *Daesoon Jinrihoe in Modern Korea: The Emergence, Transformation and Transmission of a New Religion*. Newcastle upon Tyne, UK: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2020. Hardcover. Pp. 406. £67.99.**

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One paradox of Daesoon Jinrihoe (“the Fellowship of Daesoon Truth”) is that it is at the same time the largest Korean new religion, and one on which very few academic studies are available in languages other than Korean. In addition to a handful of articles, some of them outdated or based on Korean sources hostile to the movement, the closest thing to a comprehensive treatment was a special issue of *The Journal of CESNUR* published in September-October 2018.

The situation has now changed thanks to David W. Kim, a Korean-Australian scholar who teaches courses at Kookmin University in South Korea and Australian National University in Canberra, and who has written and lectured extensively on Korean new religions. Kim’s book, *Daesoon Jinrihoe in Modern Korea*, is the first systematic treatment of this representative Korean new religion, which currently claims six million followers.

Kim opens his book by placing the emergence of the movement led by Kang Il-Sun, known to his disciples as Kang Jeungsan (1871–1909), within the context of the religious effervescence that manifested itself in Korea in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, as a reaction against both foreign imperialism—Western, Chinese, and Japanese—and the sufferings of impoverished peasants within the framework of the rigid Korean class system.

In the second chapter, Kim reconstructs the prophetic career of Kang Jeungsan, and how, from 1901 until his passing in 1909, he performed many religious rituals, known as “the Reordering of the Universe” (*Cheonjigongsa*), and gathered a sizable number of disciples. Kim also explains the dynamics that eventually led to the fragmentation of Kang’s movement into more than 100 different religious orders, and the failed attempts at their reunification.

In the third chapter, Kim introduces the second and third leading figures recognized by Daesoon Jinrihoe as its historical leaders. Jo Cheol-Je, known to his disciples as Jo Jeongsan (1895–1958), was not a direct disciple of Kang Jeungsan, but claimed to have received a revelation from him after his passing. His role as successor of Kang Jeungsan was recognized by Kang’s relatives, and he worked at creating a new religious order, which he finally incorporated in 1925 as Mugeukdo. Due to pressure

by Japanese occupants, Jo was forced to dissolve Mugeukdo in 1941, but the order was reconstructed after the war, and its name was changed into Taegeukdo in 1950. After defining the rituals and rules of Taegeukdo, Jo Jeongsan designated Park Han-Gyeong, later known as Park Wudang (1917–1995, or 1918–1996 according to the solar calendar), as his successor; Jo passed away on March 6, 1958. Some of the leaders disputed Park's authority, and these conflicts led him to reorganize the movement under the name Daesoon Jinrihoe in 1969. Park passed away on December 4, 1995, and conflicts emerged between those advocating and those denying his deification. This led to several schisms, but the largest branch, which kept the name Daesoon Jinrihoe, emerged as the largest new religion of South Korea.

In the fourth chapter, Kim discusses the formation and publication of the canonical texts of Daesoon Jinrihoe. It is significant that Kim's book coincides with the publication, in the same year 2020, of the first official translation of Daesoon Jinrihoe's scriptures: an event of great significance both for the movement's devotees and for scholars. A particularly useful part of Kim's chapter is the detailed examination of the "Scripture of the Black Tortoise" (*Hyonmu-gyeong*), the only writing created by Kang Jeungsan himself, in 1909, and a difficult, enigmatic text including mystical illustrations and their comments.

In the fifth chapter, Kim offers a systematic presentation of the doctrines of Daesoon Jinrihoe. They are centered on the idea that, at one stage during history, Heaven and Earth fell into confusion and crisis and came on the verge of annihilation. All the divine spirits, Buddhas and Bodhisattvas petitioned the highest God, Sangje, who later incarnated on earth as Kang Jeungsan, to intervene. Accepting their requests, Sangje started a "Great Itineration" 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*). The passage from the old to the new world is called *Gaebyeok* (Great Opening), a familiar millenarian concept known in Korean religions. An earthly paradise shall be established, where humans will enjoy good health, long life, and eternal happiness and wealth.

While the work of Sangje was in itself perfect and complete, the entry into the Later World is hastened through human participation. Daesoon Jinrihoe proposes four tenets, strictly connected between each other: "the virtuous concordance of Yin and Yang," "the harmonious union between divine beings and human beings," "the resolution of grievances for mutual beneficence," and "the perfected unification with Dao." The moral practice of "resolving grievances" is central in Daesoon Jinrihoe. Only by resolving grievances accumulated in history will human be able to realize an earthly immortality in an earthly paradise. One way to grasp all or most of this complex theology is to meditate on a series of symbolic paintings found in all Daesoon Jinrihoe temples and called *Simudo* (ox-seeking pictures), of which Kim offers a detailed explanation.

The sixth chapter is, in my opinion, one of the most useful for Western readers, as they are guided into the rituals of Daesoon Jinrihoe, which are difficult to grasp for non-Koreans. *Gongbu* is a specifically timed devotional incantation ritual, which is believed to hasten the opening up of the coming Earthly Paradise, and is divided into *sibak* and *sibeop*, which are different ways to chant incantations in specifically designated places and ways. Although he discusses other mantras as well, Kim insists on the importance of the *Taeoul* mantra, which is also featured in personal prayer outside of the *gongbu*, and offers further details about lighting candles, daily prayers, devotional offerings, festivals, and the ritual use of the Korean traditional dress (*Hanbok*).

The seventh and eighth chapters cover subjects on which a pre-existing literature in English already was available (including my own writings and those of Rosita Šorýtè), i.e., Daesoon Jinrihoe's temples and centers and the three main branches of its impressive social outreach (education, charity aid, and social welfare). Yet, Kim's updated summary is the fit conclusion of a comprehensive book that, while occasionally not easy to read (it would have benefited from a better copy-editing), will remain as a milestone in the academic study of Daesoon Jinrihoe.