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**CHUNGSAN-GYO: Its History, Doctrine and Ritual**

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The first of Korea’s modern syncretic religions, Tonghak, was formulated by Ch’oe Cheu at Kyongju in 1860. Forty-one years later Kane Ilsun, styled Chungsan, proclaimed a new revelation at Chonju. He died in 1910, fifty years after Ch’oe Cheu’s revelation and is said to have written and burnt a document called *P’ongyo osip nyon kongbu chongp’il*, ‘the consummation of fifty years’ mission’. Some of his followers claimed that this title indicated that Kang’s teaching was lineally descended from Tonghak; others disagreed. In either case Chungsan-gyo, as his doctrine may conveniently be called, became a major cult with eighty divergent sects, one of which, Poch’on-gyo, at one point claimed a million adherents. Though heavily suppressed by the Japanese colonial government, Chungsan-gyo revived after 1945 and now comprises at least thirty sects. It is one of the most significant groupings among the new religions of Korea.

1. The founder

Kang Ilsun was born on October 6 (19th of the 9th moon) 1871 in the house of his maternal grandparents at the present Tuji-ri, in Ip’yong township of Chongup prefecture in North Cholla province. He grew up at Tokch’on-ni in the same prefecture. His father, Hungju, came of farming stock; his mother’s name was Kwon.

According to *Taesun chon’gyong*, the biography of him by Yi Sangho which is the basis of the various Chungsan-gyo scriptures, Kang Ilsun’s mother dreamt during her pregnancy that the heavens were rent from north to south, the universe was filled with light, and a great ball of fire descended and enveloped her. Her son was born after thirteen months, gestation. Another story relates that his father saw two immortals come down and [page 29**]** tend the mother at the time of the birth, while a wonderful fragrance filled the room. The boy had a remarkable face, and his palms were marked with Chinese zodiacal logograms, jen on the left and shu on the right, indicating magnanimity and virtue. He gave signs of great wisdom from his infancy, and outstripped all his fellows in the traditional studies of classical Chinese. When he was twelve the family’s poverty compelled him to be hired out and, though still so young, he was regarded as an ‘exiled scholar’. After his marriage at the age of twenty to a girl surnamed Chong from Naeju-p’yong, Ch’och’o-myon, in Kimje prefecture, he ran a cottage school in his wife’s home and devoted himself to studying Confucian, Buddhist and taoist works, medicine, divination, and magic. He quickly gained a reputation as a teacher of religion.

Korea was then politically enfeebled. Her independence was threatened by Chinese, Japanese, and Russian policies; her economy was in ruins. Christianity had arrived from the west, and its influence was spreading rapidly under such conditions of national unrest, as also were the Tonghak doctrines of Ch’oe Cheu. The latter was the stronger of the two in Kang Ilsun’s area. He embraced it enthusiastically, but seems to have realized very quickly that Chon Pongjun’s Tonghak rebellion of 1894 would fail. He followed the rabble army from its starting point near his home as far as Ch’ongju, without taking part in the fighting.

Realizing, nevertheless, the religious potential of Tonghak, he resolved to found a system that could supercede it. He believed the desperate state of the country could not be rectified by any of the existing religions nor by human effort, and that salvation could be effected only by spiritual arts invoking divine power. Tonghak teaching about waiting on heaven for the stabilization of the created world, however, he thought was merely traditional Confucian reliance on human endeavor, thinly disguised. So he added the study of occult magic to his religious researches. When he was twenty-six years old he set off on a spiritual pilgrimage. For three years he wandered about the country, seeking out famous magicians, and in the course of these peregrinations he himself became known as a prophet, spiritual [page 30**]** healer, and thaumaturge. At Piin in North Ch’ungch’ong he met Kim Kyongso, and learned the T’aeul mantra; at Yonsan in South Ch’ungch’ong he met Kim Ilbu and learned from him the theory of *chongyok*, ‘corrected fluctuations’, by which in the age to come day and night will be of equal length throughout the year, which will always consist of 360 days, with no leap years. The T’aeul mantra and chongyok theory were to become basic elements of his new religion.

In the autumn of 1900, aged twenty-nine, he returned to Cholla to live at Kaengmang-ni, where the frequented the hills behind the village, crying aloud day and night in his quest for spiritual power. People thought he was crazy, and deliberately avoided him. In the summer of 1901 he withdrew to Taewon-sa, a monastery on Moak mountain near Chonju, where, on August 18 (5th of the 7th moon), nine days after he began a course of prayer and meditation, he was suddenly enlightened during a violent rainstorm, and was freed from avarice, lust, anger and ignorance. Enlightenment brought him divine powers; perfect knowledge of all things, both spiritual and material; and clairvoyance with understanding of astronomical principles. He could call forth wind and rain, make himself invisible, perform all magic acts, and even usher in the age to come by correcting the courses of the heavenly bodies.

After this enlightenment, he returned home. His reputation for mental derangement was reinforced when he fasted for nine days in an unheated room during the coldest winter weather, claiming that he was exercising his divine powers.

No one believed in him or accepted his new doctrines. Yet in May (4th moon) of the following year a man named Kim Hyongyol, from the village of Haun-dong near Chonju (in the present Kumsan township), who had been with Kang at Ch’ong- ju during the Tonghak rising, heard about Kang’s enlightenment and came to see him. Kim invited Kang to live in his house at Haun-dong, which soon became the center of the new cult. A few disciples appeared. Kang told them that he was the God of the Nine Heavens come down to earth, and would usher in a new creation, establishing a paradise on earth and saving [page 31**]** mankind from all its distresses. His followers were to be circumspect and not to hurt others, but to purify their hearts in preparation for the coming new order, in which they would be given divine creative powers. He also taught them some mantras, including extracts from the Confucian canon.

They held that incantation of these mantras would cause *kangsin* or *kangnyong*, ‘descent of spirits’, sometimes signalized by ecstasy and trembling, which healed the sick, preserved the health of the sound, and produced kaean, ‘opening of the eyes’ (by which spirits and distant things could be seen) and ibo ‘aural rapport’ (by which divine intimations could be heard). In Buddhism kaean means spiritual awakening to buddhahood; in Kang’s teaching it meant insight into the objective world and knowledge of the past and future. Even though they did aspire to achieve their master’s powers in re-ordering the universe by *ch’onji kongsa*, ‘cosmic rites’, his followers believed they could all attain *kaean*.

Meanwhile the master practiced medicine combined with incantations, imposition of hands, and the application of paper charms, all of which was readily accepted as the exercise of divine therapeutic powers. Those who believed they had been healed joined the new religion and acknowledged Kang as divine. They became his missionaries. They said he foretold deaths and misfortunes, the quality of harvests and the course of events. It was claimed that he could control the weather and even empower others to halt the rising sun; that a pillar of cloud stood by his house; the rain never wet him and mud never soiled his shoes. His followers increased as this miraculous reputation spread. He promised that one night he would build a myriad-chambered pearly palace, where believers would receive places appropriate to their merits, and be fed and clothed by spirits. He himself would be reborn after death. He was teaching at a time when the messianic prophecies of the curious book *Chong-gam-nok* were in vogue, and many were looking for the advent of the bodhisattva Maitreya or the rebirth of Ch’oe Cheu. Kang Ilsun appeared to such people, and they flocked to him with their eschatological hopes. The movement crystallized into an organization.

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His critics called his cult Human’i-gyo, after *humch’i*, the first two syllables of his principal mantra. The name was derogatory, for *Humch’i* was also a pun on a Korean word meaning ‘theft’. At first he gave his creed no formal name, but referred to it as ‘the sublime way (*muguk-taedo*) unparalleled in history’. After his death, when his concubine Ko succeeded him, the names Taeul-gyo, ‘teaching of the primordial monad’, and Sondo-gyo, ‘teaching of the way of immortals’, were adopted.

Doctrine was neither systematised nor codified. The group cohered merely in its devotion to the practices taught by Kang and in its hope for the promised paradise.

Kang himself, having moved with Kim Hyongyol to Ch’ong-do-ri, now began a peripatetic life, visiting the houses of his followers. He wore heavy cotton in summer, light summer clothing in winter. He never wore an ordinary hat, but carried a huge straw rain-hat in his hand. His words were sometimes incomprehensible. Such eccentric behavior made most people treat him as mad, but others took it as proof of his extraordinary religious powers.

In July (6th moon) 1907, five years after he took up with Kim Hyongyol, he first met Ch’a Kyongsok, who lived at Taehung-ni, in Ibam township, near Chongup. He then began to dress normally and stayed at Taehung-ni, devoting himself more assiduously to planning his part in the coming new creation, whereby his teachings would unite all the world’s governments into one (*sin segyo chohwa chongbu*). He took Ch’a Kyongsok’s widowed sister-in-law Ko as his concubine, and called her house Subu-so, ‘place of hie head wife’, to express the role of yin and yang in the re-ordering of creation. Then at Tonggong-ni, near Kumsan, in the house of Kim Chunsang, he set up a special medicine-cabinet, containing twenty-six remedies for the diseases he expected would ravage the world. He is said to have called the cabinet *anjang-nong*, ‘funeral chest’, or *sinju-dok*, ‘spirit-tablet dais’, and told Ko it would be hers. (Some say *anjang-nong* was a name given after his death, when thirty yen found in the chest were used to pay for his funeral; and that Ko used the cabinet as an altar-cupboard to enshrine his spirit-tablet, thus [page 33**]** giving rise to the name *sinju-dok*. Because it was expected to enshrine Kang’s spirit, it was reverently preserved after his death, and Cho Ch’olche, founder of T’aeguk-to, once attempted to steal it. Kang labelled Kim Chunsang’s house Kwangje-guk, ‘department of universal healing’, and made it the center of his medical work. He took a daughter of Kim Hyongyol, his first disciple, as his third spouse, again explaining that yin and yang must be properly balanced and physically expressed by the union of male and female. His followers addressed both concubines by the honorific title *samo*.

He named Ch’a Kyongsok’s home P’ojong-so, ‘place of the promulgation of government’; Kim Kyonghak’s house in Pae- gam-ni was Taehakkyo, ‘great school;; Sin Kyongwon’s house at T’aein, Pongnok-so, place of blessing’; and Sin Kyougsu’s house at Kobu, Sumyong-so, ‘place of longevity’. Pak Kongu was appointed *man’guk-taejang*. ‘general of the nations’. Twenty- four chief disciples were named, of whom twelve had previously been Tonghak followers. Ch’a Kyongsok and Kim Hyongyol were Kang’s principal lieutenants. Accompanied by small groups, he travelled about North Cholla, preparing his great work, teaching new followers, and occasionally holding training sessions for larger groups that lasted several days at a time. He was regarded with suspicion as one who misled the common people with occult practices. Local officials kept a careful watch on him, in case he fomented rebellion. Finally, when lie had met together with about twenty others in Sin Kyongsu’s house at Kobu, on January 28,1908, the Japanese gendarmerie arrested them on suspicion of raising a group of *uibyong* (loyalist volunteers). The others were released after fifteen days, but Kang was detained for more than forty days. Most of his followers, unable to square his pretensions about reorganizing creation with his inability to avoid his misfortune, decided he was a fraud and left him.

Even his more loyal and enthusiastic supporters began to express doubts and complaints. Taesun chon’gyong tells how Sin Wonil, one of the twenty-four chief disciples, said to him: “You have been working for the establishment of paradise on earth for a long time, but nothing has happened Your followers are [page 34**]** racked with doubt, and the world at large is scoffing. We beg you to found the earthly paradise at once, and restore our reputation.”

Kang replied: “Human affairs depend on opportunity, heavenly affairs on due proportion; and my work requires both human opportunity and heavenly proportion. If I were to abandon this principle and try to hasten matters, I should bring disaster on the world and death to millions. So I cannot do what you ask.”

His disciples’ relations complained that he was deceiving people and ruining happy homes. Meanwhile, strict surveillance by the justices brought his activity virtually to a standstill. He was in his thirty-eighth year when he died suddenly on August 14 (24th of the 6th moon) 1909, almost exactly eight years after his enlightenment experience at Taewon-sa. It is reported that very few of his disciples accompanied Ch’a Kyongsok and Kim Hyongyol to the funeral. They were afraid of being laughed at.

2. Schisms

Chungsan’s teaching had laid so much stress on his own role in creating the new order that his death meant the end of his organization. His followers were divided. Some of them believed that he had not really died, but merely returned to his foremer state as Lord of the Nine Heavens or as Maitreya, and that lie would return. They thought he would continue to protect them, would ensure the inauguration of the earthly paradise and the eventual full enlightenment of believers. They also believed that mankid could be saved from impending disease by Chungsan’s medicines alone.

On November 9 (19th of the 9th moon) 1911, two years after his death, his concubine Ko suddenly fainted during a ceremony commemorating his birthday. When she recovered, her speech and behavior were strangely altered. She claimed that his ‘holy spirit’ (songnyong) had invested her. She had the medicine cabinet fetched from Kim Hyongyol’s house and treated it as though it were a spirit-tablet. Word soon got around that [page 35**]** her voice and mannerisms had become uncannily like Chung-san’s, and that he had returned to earth in her. Some of the faithful accepted this as a fulfilment of his own prophecies. The twenty-four chief disciples and many others re-assembled, and began to treat Ko as the reincarnation of Chungsan. By 1914 she was recognized as head of the sect in succession to the founder. Ch’a Kyongsok and Kim Hyongyol were among the prime movers in the missionary movement that was now started under the name of T’aeul-gyo or Sondo-gyo. Numbers grew rapidly.

Ch’a Kyongsok, however, with the object of making himself head of the sect, tried to separate the chief disciples from Ko. He declared her house a *yemun*, ‘house of honor’, which all ordinary believers were forbidden to enter. No one was allowed to see her, and Ch’a took over executive authority. Eventually he persuaded her to retire to her father-in-law’s house at Kaeng-mang-ni, where she was kept in isolation till in 1919, with the connivance of Kang Ungch’il, a kinsman of Chungsan, she was able to move to Chojong-ni, in Paeksan township of Kimje prefecture, where she gathered some of the faithful around her, built a place of worship, and began to propagate the faith under the name of T’aeul-gyo.

In the same year, 1919, Ch’a Kyongsok expanded his power base by naming sixty *pangju*, ‘divisional leaders’, as a first stage in organizing an entirely new sect. In 1921 at a *koch’on-je*, ‘an- nounccment to Heaven’, on Hwangsok Mountain at Hamyang, he proclaimed the sect name Pohwa-gyo, ‘doctrine of universal transformation’, and the dynastic title Siguk, ‘timely realm’, in 1922 his sect was registered with the Government-General of Chosen as Poch’ongyo, ‘doctrine of universal Heaven’. Thereafter others of Chungsan’s leading disciples also claimed each to have inherited the founder’s succession and started sects of their own. Chungsan had indeed appointed twenty-four leading disciples and given them authority to take part in his preparations for the new creation. Moreover, at a ceremony in Kim Kapch’il’s house at Tonggok, he had given joints of bamboo to nine of them (their names are not recorded), saying that he passed his doctrine on to them, and that it would flourish like [page36**]** the bamboo. So others could claim the succession as plausibly as Ch’a Kyongsok. And they did.

Kim Hyongyol followed Ko at first. Then he parted from Ch’a Kyongsok, and took up with Chungsan’s first wife, Chong, whom he taught to recite mantras that would attract Chung- san’s spirit to enter her. This project came to nothing because Chong was mentally deranged. Kim Hyongyol then went for a time to Kumgang-dae on Moak mountain to perform spiritual exercises so that he himself should receive the spirit. He returned declaring he had succeeded, and started a new sect at his own house. Instead of teaching the T’aeul mantra, he taught his followers the *sich’on* formula of Tonghak, and gave people charm-papers, varying according to their birth-years, and told them to burn these charms as a prophylactic against disease and disaster. (There is a tradition that Chungsan had done the same thing.)

His followers are said to have numbered several thousand. In 1916, announcing that the disease foretold by Chungsan was about to appear and destroy mankind, he gave charm-papers to 360 agents whom he sent to bury them in each of 360 magistracies. He also taught that Chungsan was really an incarnation of Maitreya who, having inaugurated the 50,000 years of the naga-puspa era, when he was due to come to earth, had now withdrawn into the great statue of Maitreya at Kumsan-sa, the important temple and monastery near Chongup. Kim therefore revered that statue at the ‘spiritual body’ (*yongch’e*) of Chungsan. This idea also accorded with a prophecy made by Chungsan. Kim Hyongyol persuaded Kwak Popkyong, the monk-in-charge of Kumsan-sa, to start a group called Maitreya Buddhism. Thousands enrolled in it, but the Japanese authorities accused Kim Hyongyol of sorcery and rebellion. The Maitreya Buddhists were forcibly disbanded, and Kim was imprisoned for a while. After his release he formed the Buddhist Promotion Society (Pulgyo Chinhung-hoe) in Seoul as an attempt to reorganize his Maitreya Buddhists. In 1922 he revived the name Maitreya Buddhism and returned to Kumsan-sa, but because the group taught that their Buddha was Chungsan dwelling in the monastery’s Maitreya statue, the abbot insisted that they [page 37**]** leave the place. The sect could not survive once it was deprived of its base at Kumsan-sa.

An Naesong, another of the original twenty-four, also stayed with Ko for a while, but he grew disenchanted with Ch’a Kyongsok’s pretensions, and in 1914 withdrew to his native Yo-su, where he preached under the name of T’aeul-gyo. In 1917 he continued at Sunch’on, and in 1918 at Muan, but in 1925 he moved to Paegun-dong in Ch’ongdo-ri, in Kumsan township of Kimje prefecture, where he changed the name of his doctrine to Chungsan Taedo-gyo, ‘the great tao of Chungsan’.

Another of the twenty-four, Kim Ch’ibok, helped Ch’a Kyongsok with his reorganization of the sect at first, but left him in 1916 to set up an independent group at Wonp’yong, near Kumgu, under the name Chehwa-gyo, ‘doctrine of transformation by healing’. Later he returned to his native Puan, where he and Ho Uk (styled Namsong, ‘southern pine’) created a new sect, centered on the house of So Sangbom in Chogyang township of Hadong prefecture, under the name Samdok-kyo, ‘doctrine of three virtues’. Samdok-kyo had an elaborate constitution based on the ninefold conformation of Chu Hsi’s beloved valley at Wu-i in Fukien. Samdok-kyo was dissolved by the Japanese colonial government. It revived again after the liberation in 1945 by So Sangbom and Yi Tongmok, working in So’s house at Yongsan-ni in Kumsan township, where it still exists, at least on paper.

Pak Kongu, Chungsan’s ‘general of the nations’, began preaching in Hungdok township of Chongup prefecture, but won few followers until he moved to T’aein in 1916 and used the name T’aeul-gyo. Later he moved to Wonp’yong, where he died in 1928. His disciple and successor Pak Chongsu carries on under the name Chungsan-Inam-gyo (from Inam, ‘benevolent cottage’, which was Pak Kongu’s literary style). The sect is doctrinally and organizationally too weak to survive the death of its present members.

Mun Kongsin was one of the disciples who was disenchanted when Ch’ungsan was arrested at Kobu in 1907. When Ko [page 38**]** and others started their own sects, so did Mun. After his death it continued at Namyang-ni, Pongsan township, Kimje prefecture, under Kim Tongsop. It is still known as *Chungsan-gyo Mun Kongsin p’a*, ‘Mun Kongsin’s sect’, but is very weak indeed.

Kim Kwangch’an was another disciple of Chungsan. He preached in his home town of Namwon. Because Chungsan had said that reading Li Po’s *Tao-li-yuan hsu-wen*, ‘peach orchard essay’, a thousand times would induce enlightenment, Kim Kwangch’an made that text the core of his teaching, and his sect was called Toriwon-pa’a, ‘peach orchard sect’. The sect disappeared after he died in prison, but one of his followers, Yi Kunha, studied *Tao-li-yuan hsu-wen* and the Buddhist *Naga-puspa sutra* (*hunghua ching*, ‘dragon-flower sutra’- the dragon- flower being a tree in Maitreya’s heaven), and concluded that Chunffsan’s teaching was an amalgam of taoism and Buddhism. On the strength of that opinion he started a group called Yong- hwa-gyo, ‘dragon-flower doctrine’, in 1926 in Sangso township of Hamyang prefecture. The sect died when Yi Kunha died.

Many more of Chungsan’s followers passed on his teaching to small groups which were in effect new sects, although they were not organized under new names. It is impossible to tell how many there were. The number was further swollen by the fissi- parousness of the sects already described.

The divisions of Poch’on-gyo, however, the group which Ch’a Kyongsok formally inaugurated in 1921, deserve more careful attention. Poch’on-gyo was the strongest section of Chungsan’s legacy. Ch’a eventually built an elaborate complex of shrine buildings at Taehung-ni in Ibam township, a little south of Chongup. He was called *ch’onja*, ‘son of heaven’ ‘an old Chinese imperial title, and was constantly in trouble with the police on accusations of fraud or sedition. In 1935 his main temple hall was moved to Seoul, where it stands as the main hall of the Buddhist Chogye-sa. In early summer 1936 Ch’a died, and three months later the colonial government suppressed Poch’on-gyo completely. After 1945 it revived a little, and ageing believers still meet for regular worship at Ch’a’s homestead in Taehung-ni. Here is an outline of the chief tributaries [page 39**]** of his sect.

Sin Hyonch’ol, a member of the Poch’gyo staff, as a result of friction with Ch’a over an incident involving the sect’s funds, conspired with Kim Yongdu and Chang Kangman of Seoul to set up a T’aeul-gyo headquarters in the capital. They hoped to destroy Ch’a’s group, but in the event they failed to establish their own.

Yi Sangho and his brother Songyong (alias Chongnip) were also members of the staff. They hoped to improve the reputation of Poch-on-gyo by systematizing its doctrines and obtaining Government-General recognition. They were able men: Sangho was director of the Seoul bureau and ran the daily newspaper *Sidae Ilbo*, while Songyong published the magazine *Pogwang*. In 1920 they quarrelled with Ch’a. They failed in an attempt to reform the sect, left it, and emigrated to Manchuria. When they returned to Korea they joined forces with I’m Kyongho, another defector from the Poch’on-gyo staff, and at the winter solstice of 1928 founded Tonghwa-gyo, ‘doctrine of orient splendor’, at Yonghwa-dong in Kumsan township.

Ch’oe Wisok was yet another defector from Ch’a’s staff. For many years he remained a private believer in Chungsan, and after 1946 he invited the two Yi brothers and others to join him in refounding the religion at his house in Hapchong-dong, Map’o, Seoul. This new organization was called Taebop- sa, ‘service of the great law’. The Yi brothers became central chairman and general secretary, while Ch’oe Wisok was chief planning officer. They seem to have met with some success, but at the outbreak of the Korean war in 1950 the Yi brothers fled to North Cholla, where they set up ‘Taebop-sa’ at Yong-hwa-dong near Kumsan. Ch’oe refused to accept this, and maintained his organization in Seoul. The Yi brothers’ sect is now called Tongdo-gyo Chungsan Kyoboe, ‘Chungsan church of the doctrine of oriental *tao*’.

Ch’ao Kyongdae and his brother Kyuil were disciples of Chungsan, who eventually broke with Ch’a Kyongsok and set up a shrine for Chungsan at his birthplace, Kacngmang-ni, [page40**]** near Kobu. In 1924 Ch’ae Kyongdae was joined by Kim Onsu, another Poch’on-gyo official, in turning this shrine into a sect headquarters called Samsong-gyo, ‘doctrine of the three sages’. They succeeded in attracting a number of Poch’on-gyo believers, but when they built a meeting-place at Chongnung near Seoul, and began preaching an Ch’onin-gyo, ‘doctrine of heaven and man’, the leaders were arrested by the Japanese for sedition, and the organization was dissolved. Ch’ae Kyongdae started Sillong-sa, ‘Divine Husbandman Company’, to acquire development land in Chi-lin, Manchuria, so that several hundred households of his co-religionists could emigrate, but the enterprise petered out when he died in Manchuria.

After the 1945 liberation Sin Wonmok of Taegu took over the Kaengmang-ni shrine and started regular sacrifices. He assembled a score or so believers and held training sessions. This was the so-called Kaengmang-ni sect.

Kang Sangbaek was a Cheju native who became an official in Poch-on-gyo. In 1929 he claimed that he had been spiritually awakened by reciting an obscure mantra. (The mantra was supposed to have been used by the legendary ruler Yu of Hsia: it appears to have been a recent esoteric invention, and its text is exceedingly opaque.) During the following winter he returned to Cheju, where he established the headquarters of Susan-gyo, ‘doctrine of waters and hills’ at Myongdok-tong in Hallim township. After his death in 1961 his group split into three, each with its own teaching.

One of Kang’s disciples, Kim Sunenye, started a sect at Hongno-ri in south Cheju. For a time he was associated with the Yi brothers’ Tongdo-gyo, but they excommunicated him. His sect is referred to as Hongno Kyohoe, from the name of the village.

Kim Hwanok was yet another Poch’on-gy offiocial who seceded. He travelled widely in search of truth, and met So Sang- gun, a former Poch-on-gyo believer who claimed to have contacted the divine spirit of Ch’oe Cheu while pursuing spiritual exercises in the mountains. Guided by So, Kim Hwanok claimed [page 41**]** that he had reconciled the doctrines of Chungsan-gyo and Tonghak. He said he was Kungang Taesin, ‘great spirit of the Vajra’, and taught his new system in the Chiri and Moak areas till he formally established Muguk Taedo, ‘the sublime way’―Chungsan’s own phrase—at Paegam-ni in Ch’ilbo township of Chongup prefecture. In 1942 the Japanese imprisoned him at Chonju for violating the Public Security Law, and while lie was in prison he met and made friends with a Chungsangyo follower named Kim Chaehon. After the liberation they together launched Muguk Taedo Pohwa-gyo (commning Chungsan’s and Ch’a Kyongsok’s original titles) at Paegam-ni. After Kim Hwanok’s death, Kim Chaehon moved the sect to Sint’aein in 1953; then again in 1957 to Ssangnyong-ni in Kumsan prefecture of Kimje prefecture, where it is known as Tongdo-gyo Pohwa Kyohoe.

Yo Ch’oja was a woman from Sinnyong-ni, near Yongch’on in North Kyongsang. Till she was thirty she refused to marry, declaring that shet as a divvinely-inspired prophet, and people said she was the sort to be an empress. When she was thirty- six, Ch’a Kyongsok said he would need an empress in his new dynasty and offered to marry her. She declined. Meanwhile So Chongil, a Poch ‘on-gyo believer, heard of her, and together with other dissidents from Ch’a’s group, founded a sect with her as its head. After 1945 they moved to Yonghwa-dong in Kimje prefecture, under the name of Sondo-gyo, ‘doctrine of the immortal *tao*’. So Chongil and at least four others have started splinter groups, while the continuing group of Yo’s sect is called Muul-gyo.

Kim Kyeju was one of those who left Poch’on-gyo for Yo Ch’oja’s sect. He was obsessed with the study of Kim Ilbu’s ‘corrected fluctuations’ theory, which had meant so much to Chungsan. In 1942, when he was forty-two years old, he said he had received a revelation from Chungsan and began to preach Mu-gyo in Unnidong, Soch’ang township, near Kwang- ju. In 1946 he changed the name to Muul-gyo. After he was killed in the Korean war, Kim Naktu, also a former follower of Yo Ch’oja, took over Muul-gyo, but in 1963 it was registered as Miruk-chong, ‘Maitreya sect’, by Kim Honghyon, once a follower of So Sanggun. One splinter group lives under Yi [page 42**]** Tongok in Moak-san, and another under Pak Tonghok at Sinamni in Yonggwang prefecture.

Kim Chongnyol, originally from Pyongch’ang in Kang-won, also left Poch’on-gyo after quarrelling with Ch’a Kyongsok, and lived as an independent Chungsan-gyo believer. After 1945 he joined Yi Sangho’s Chungsan Taedo-hoe, but left it, accusing Yi of corrupt practices. In March 1952 he organized Immu-gyo at his house in Ssangnyong-ni.

So Sanggun, who so influenced Kim Hwanok, had left Ch’a Kyongsok after serving him as bodyguard and labor organizer. After 1945 he was living in a thatched hut he built in the hills above Ch’ongdo-ri, and tilled a few mountain fields. Many people regarded him as a sage, and formed a ‘So Sang-gun sect’. When he died in 1962 Kim Kit’ae took over their leadership.

Ch’oe Kumbong, another of So’s disciples, declared he had contacted Unjang-sin, ‘cloud leader spirit’, and bought the house in Tonggok that Chungsan in his lifetime had called Kwangje-guk and used as his medical center. It now became the focus of a flourishing Yakpang-eyo, ‘apothecary doctrine’. Ch’oe died in 1960. His wife behaves very much like a shaman, and has many clients.

Cho Chesung was yet another defector from the Poch’on-gyo staff. He met So Ch’ongjuk (alias So Paegil) in Kunsan grain market, and they decided to form a religious sect. In 1931 they assembled some followers as Kumsan-sa Miruk-pulgyo Pogyo-so, ‘Kumsan Monastery Maitreya Buddhism Mission’, at To-gomi, in Yangmum township of Kurye prefecture. They siad Chungsan was not dead, but had often been seen gathering medicinal herbs on Namhae and Ibaek islands, Cho broke away before long. So was imprisoned for six months for contravening the Temples Law. In 1935 he moved to Hadong, where he was again arrested, this time under the Public Security Law, and sentenced, first to eighteen months’ imprisonment, then to three years. He was released after the 1945 liberation and lived for a time at Sangbul Hermitage, in Hwagye township of [page 43**]** Hadong, and Wibong Monastery at Chonju, before setting up his own Won’gak-sa, an establishment in Wansan-dong, Chonju; and Namil-sa, another at Chongdong-ni in Ujon township, with about 200 believers. In 1953 he founded Yonghwa-sa at Ch’ongdo-ri, which still functions there under the name of Taehan Pulgyo Yonghwa-jong.

Han Pyongsu was also a Poch’on-gyo officer. He proclaimed himself *T’aeul chinin*, ‘adept of the primordial monad’, and started Inch’on-gyo, ‘doctrine of man and heaven’, in P’irun-dong, Seoul. After his death it wad continued by Yi Tokche. Since the Korean war it has been in Taejon.

Pak Int’aek of Puyo was another who was disgusted by what went on in Poch-on-gyo. He and Hong Sunok left the sect and gathered a group of believers as Won’gun-gyo, ‘doctrine of the prime rulers,’ at Chiso-ri in Sannae township of Puyo prefecture. It has now disappeared.

Within Poch’on-gyo itself there was a division into old and new parties which began during Ch’a Kyongsok’s lifetime. At first he had treated Chungsan as the founder and source of Poch’on-gyo, but as his work succeeded he began to neglect Chungsan and center attention on his own teachings. Those who maintained reverence for Chungsan became the old school, and those who emphazised Ch’a became the new school. In 1954 they came into open conflict over the publication of Ch’a’s book *Sijong*, ‘time adjustment’, which some of them treated as their bible. The old school insisted that a brief notice of Chungsan should be prefixed to the work; the new school disagreed. About the same time the new school proposed to move Ch’a’s spirit- tablet from its separate shrine into the main shrine with Chungsan. As a result the new school seceded under the leadership of Ch’a’s second son, Ch’a Yongnam, and the two groups have become separate organizations.

We now turn to the subsequent divisions of the Maitreya groups.

When Kim Hyongyol, as already described, in 1916 [page 44**]** selected 360 men from his Maitreya group to be commissioned and sent out with charms to combat the monstrous disease foretold by Chungsan, one of the 360 was a Sunch’on man named Chang Kijun. But Chang lost confidence in the idea and went off to the foot of Kuksa-bong, a mountain in Ssangam township near Sunch’on, where he read the preface of the Shu ching a thousand times. Chungsan had said that this practiec would lead to enlightenment, and Chang Kijun declared that his effort had been successful. He asserted that the essence of Chungsan-gyo was in Chungsan’s collection of charms *Hyonmu-gyong*, ‘sable warrior classic’ (‘sable warrior’ is the name for the tortoise and snake locked in sexual embrace that form an astronomical emblem for the north). On the basis of Hyonmu-gyong, Chang established a new sect, Sunch’on:gyo, named after his own birthplace. Chang was succeeded by Yu Ch’ullae of Kohung, who in 1939 moved the sect to Namyang-ni, in Pongsan township of Kimje prefedture. The sect is also known as Pommun-p’a, because the Hyonmu-gyong was called pom- mun, ‘text of the law’.

Pak Ilmun, styled Mosan, was a Muul-eyo member who joined the Pommun-p’a, but quarrelled with Yu Ch’ullae and formed his own sect with the help of Pak Ponghwan (also ex- Muul-gyo and Pommun-p’a) and Kim Pongsu. This was called Suncn on-gyo Yonggwang (‘spiritual light’) p’a, or Mosan-p’a. Another Pommun-p’a man, Chu Chongyun, also parted from Yu Ch’ullae and started a group near Iri. After Chu’s death Kang Taehyong succeeded him, but their sect is now very weak.

Another of Kim Hyongyol’s disciples in the cult of the Kumsan-sa Maitreya was Yu Chebong. On April 4, 1935, after Kim’s death, the statue was destroyed by fire. Yu Chebong joined the then abbot of the monastery, Monghwan, in organizing a group called Miruk-kyo or Yonghwa-gyo to finance the restoration. The members of this group were in effect the former Maitryea Buddhists. When Yu Chebong died, Ch’oe Sonho took over the leadership, and there are still some continuing worshippers of the Kumsan Maitreya as Chungsan’s ‘spirit body’.

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Kim Hyongyol had a brother-in-law, Kim Chahyon, who was also a disciple of Chungsan. He helped Hyongyol found Miruk Pulgyo and assumed the leadership of the group after Hyongyol’s death. When Chahyon died his sons T’aejin and T’aebong carried the sect on. It is known as Chungsan-gyo Kim Chahyon p’a. In 1959 a woman relative of Kim T’aebong, who is said to have performed as a shaman, dreamt that Chung-san’s third wife (Kim Hyongyol’s daughter, in whose house the famous medicine cabinet was installed) appeared to her and demanded redress for her grievances. Apparently the only marriage ceremony she had been through with Chungsan was a threefold circumambulation of the medicine cabinet, and they had never slept together. When Chungsan was dying, Kim Hyongyol said he would marry the girl to someone else—she was still in her teens—but Chungsan said that if she married again disaster would befall the family. Nevertheless, she was married again, and soon fell ill and died. Her death was naturally ascribed to Chungsan’s curse, and this was what she was supposed to be complaining about in the dream. Her remains were exhumed and enshrined in a small concrete building erected behind her house, where her spirit was venerated, Most of the worshippers were women. They were known as Kim Samo p’a.

We can now turn to the history of An Naesong’s Taedo-gyo, started at Paegun-dong in 1925. When An died in 1949 there was no obvious successor and the sect broke up into several functions: ‘elder’ factions under Yu Yonguj, Kwak Sanggon, and Paek Un’gi; and ‘younger’ factions under An’s eldest son Munhwan, Nam Sanggi and Ch’a Namgyu, all operating in the vicinity of Paegun-dong.

Kim Nagwon was another follower of An Naesong, who left him to join Ch’ae Kyongdae’s Sillong-sa, the previously mentioned resettlement venture in Manchuria. After three years in Manchuria, he returned to Ch’ongdo-ri in 1941 and set up a group called Chungsan-gyo Odongjong-ni p’a. He claimed several hundred followers, but his group had been missed in the government registration of Chungsan-gyo, so he attempted to gain recognition by allying himself with So Chunyong and Hwang Taeho in their movement to unify [page 46**]** Korea’s new religions. When Maitreya Buddhism was ostensibly unified as Yonghwa Pulgyo Hyangdo-hoe (described below) on July 7 1965, Kim Nagwon became its senior adviser. Later, when Hwang Taeho resigned, Kim succeeded him as chairman, but So Chunyong is the effective leader. The object of the organization, however, is so impracticable that the organization cannot long survive.

There remain four other significant schisms of the Maitreya cult to be mentioned. One was a development of the T’aeul-gyo set up at Chojong-ni in 1914 by Chungsan’s concubine Ko when she separated from Ch’a Kyongsok. In 1931 she joined forces with Yi Sangho’s Tonghwa-gyo in Yongwa-dong, then in 1933 she moved to a new place ta Osong-san in Songsan township, Okku prefecture, and called it Tonghwa Kyohoe Suyangso, ‘spiritual exercise place of the Orient Splendor Church’. When she died in autumn 1935, three of her followers claimed the succession and started rival groups: Ko Minhwan at Kumsan, Yi Yonggi at Samnye, and Paek Yunhwa at Iri—all under the name of Chungsan-gyo Ko Samo p’a.

Cho Ch’olche’s story began in Manchuria, where he was living with his father, Cho Yongmo, who had fled there because of his anti-Japanese activities. In 1909, when he was fourteen, Ch’olche met Kim Hyok, who taught him Chungsan’s doctrine. Ch’olche spent some time in spiritual exercises in the mountains and claimed he had been enlightened. In 1917, aged twenty- two, he returned with a group to Anmyon Island, off the South Ch’ungch’ong coast, and began to teach his cult. To create a proper succession he took Chungsan’s sister as his concubine. She had been married to Pak Ch’angguk of Sondol hamlet at Kobu, but was now wandering about claiming to be divinely inspired. After that he took into his house Chungsan’s first wife, Chong, and only daughter, Kang Sunim, who had been married at the age of twelve to Yang Tokchin. (Chungsan had no sons.) At the same time Cho Ch’olche was attempting to lay sound financial foundations by developing farmland. In 1921 he set up Muguk-to, ‘the *tao* of th infinite’, otherwise Ch’onin-gyo, ‘teaching of heaven and man’, at T’aein. By the following year he had built two four-story shrines, *sohgjon* and [page 47**]** *yongdae*. In 1925 he changed the same of the sect to Mugik Taedo-gyo, and since Ch’a Kyongsok was known as *ch’onja*. ‘son of heaven’, he took the same style―so confident was his group. The Japanese colonial government, however, disbanded it. It was revived after the liberation. In 1948 the headquarters was in Posan-dong in the city of Pusan, and called T’aeguk-to. In 1955 it moved to Kamch’on-dong in Pusan, but after the death of Cho Ch’olche in 1958 it split into old and new factions.

Kang Sunim stayed in Cho Ch’olche’s house for nearly ten years. Then, at the age of twenty-three she left, and for nine years lived a wandering life. When she was thirty-two she went to live with one Kim Pyongch’ol, a North Kyongsang native who was living in Chonju. In 1942 they moved to Uisong in North Kyongsang, where they made underground places in Kumsong Mountain and Ghangdaegok. In these caves they set up a statue of Chungsan and one of Tan’gun, legendary founder of the Korean nation. They managed to avoid discovery by the Japanese gendarmes; and after the liberation they went back to the homeland of Chungsan-gyo, and lived under Moak-san. In 1947 on Sakyamuni’s birthday (which fell that year on May 27) they erected a thirteen-foot Buddha-statue of Chungsan at Ch’ongdo-ri in Kuri-gol. (Chungsan had said he would return in a thirteen-foot body, and many of his followers believed that in the new age all men would be of that height.) Kang Sunim became head of a sect called Chungsan Hyang- won, ‘worship institute’, which soon claimed tens of thousands of believers. In 1949 they erected a mausoleum and temple enshrining a picture of Chungsan at Orial-t’o in Kumsan-ni. (Although Cho Ch’olche had stolen Chungsan’s corpse in 1919, when Cho quarrelled with Mun Kongsin at Taejon, the police ordered that it should go back to Ch’a Kyongsok, from whom it passed into his daughter’s hands.)

Their group was registered in 1953 as Chungsan Sonbul- gyo, indicating a fusion of taoism and Buddhism. Kang Sunim died in April 1959, and Kim Pyongch’ol, as her husband, took over from hen Following the Ministry of Education’s policy for native religions in 1961, the title was changed to Tongdo-gyo Popchong Kyohoe. Then in 1963 Kim Pyongch’ol’s son Yangho [page 48**]** claimed he had received the succession, and built a new place of worship at Kuri-gol, where he attracted some of the sect to form Ch’ongdo Tae-hyongwon.

The fourth and last of these schisms began when Chong Inp’yo came from Soyang in Wanju prefecture declaring that he had been enlightened by God and received the spirit of Chungsan from the Maitreya Buddha image at Kumsan-sa. He tried to reassemble Kim Hyongyol’s former Maitreya Buddhism group, and declared that he had Chungsan’s power to renew the world. He was jailed in Chonju for prophesying the defeat of Japan, and not released till the liberation of 1945. He went to Taehung-ni in T’aein township, and built a temple where he ran ‘Maitreya Buddhism’ till he died in 1955. Two of his dissciples, Chong Kongil and Kim Hungsu, attempted to take over his work, the former applying for government registration as Miruk-pul Yongwon-hoe, ‘Society of Maitreya of the perpetual vow’, and the latter doing the same as Miruk Pulgyo. Eventually they joined forces to register as Miruk Pulgyo; but in fact they still operate separately.

After the liberation of 1945, when Japanese repression came to an end, something like eighty sects of Chungsan-gyo appeared, and there was naturally a movement to unite them.

In 1945 Yu Tongsol, a leading figure in the provisional government, started a movement for the unification of Korean native religions. An organization called Chungsan Kyodan T’ongjong Won, institute for organizing Chungsan sects’, was set up at the Sich’on-gyo church in Seoul, but it disappeared at the time of the Korean war in 1950.

On February 28, 1955, following government instructions, a unification movement called Chungsan Taedo-hoe was established in the Taebop-sa building at Yondiwa-ri, under the leadership of Yi Chongnip (i.e., Yi Songyong, who had published the magazine *Pogwahg* for Poch’on-gyo before 1920) . In fact, this was no more than a change of name for Taebop-sa, and it came to nothing.

In December 1961, following the Ministry of Education’s [page 49**]** policy for uniting native cults, an association called Tongdo-hoe was started, centering on Minjok Sinang Yonmacng, ‘folk religion league’, led by Yi Ch’anyong. It comprised thirteen sects, including Chungsan Taedohoe, Chungsan Sonbul-gyo, Pohwa- gyo, Samdok-kyo, Poch’on-gyo, Miruk Pulgyo, and T’aeguk-to. The last three, however, were disallowed by the Ministry because of their internal schisms; the other four continue under the prefix Tongdo-gyo ‘doctrine of Korean tao’. They appear to be trying to establish a national religion combining the cult of Tan’gun with the teachings of Ch’oe Cheu and Chungsan.

So Chunyong has already been mentioned as an administrative leaders of Muul-gyo who adopted the Maitreya version of Chungsan-g-o. In December 1963 he tried to register Muul-gyo in this form. In April 1964 he joined with Hwang Taeho (former monk-in-charge of Muryang-sa, near Puyo), Son Songhan, and Yi Kapsul at a meeting in Seoul to form an association of ex-Buddhists and other ostracized religious groups in order to obtain official recognition for them. The following August they persuaded Kim Nagwon of the Odongjong-ni group and other esoteric religious leaders to join them, and on August 1965 (the 7th day of the 7th moon) in a wedding-hall at Chouju. They inaugurated Yonghwa-gyo Hyangdohoe. The headquarters are in Chon-dong chonju. Hwang T’aeho was president, but when he realized it was merely an organization to promote Kim Nagwon’s sect, he resigned. It is now, as previously suggested, in effect So Chunyong’s affair, and its propects are not good.

This very sketchy account of Chungsan-gyo, listing the chief names and dates, has ignored the real motives of the divisions. It is perhaps worth noting, however, that the essential fissiparousness of Chungsan-gyo derives from the fact that it is a syncretic faith with no canonical scriptures. Schisms have derived from emphasis on Buddhist or taoist elements in turn, from theories about the succession of the leadership, and from simple self-aggrandizement by strong characters within the movement.

3. Doctrine and ‘Cosmic Rites’

Chungsan-gyo was in origin a syncretic fusion of taoist, [page 50**]** Buddhist, Confucian and other elements to such an extent that it has no distinctive doctrine, and is simply an amalgam of Korean folk beliefs. It was reluctantly, if at all, accorded respect by outsiders. Some of its followers were therefore anxious to codify their doctrine. Thus in 1921 the brothers Yi Sangho and Yi Songyong, of Poch-gyo, while compiling Taesun chon’gvong, published *Sa tae kyogang*. Tour great principles of doctrine’, which were: fear God; foster virtue; correct ethics; love men. The other sects, however, nave little doctrine in common, and even Poch’on-gyo teaching went through considerable changes. Some groups changed their doctrines to win government approval, as when Muul-go registered as a Maitreya sect. The data are therefore so confused that I cannot pretend to offer a systematic analysis. All I can do is discuss Chungsan’s concept of *c’onji kongsa*, ‘cosmic rites’, because that is the core of his teaching as recorded in Taesun chon’gyong. I rely heavily on *Taesun c’orhak*, an attempt to explain Chungsan’s doctrine by Yi Songyong, written under his alias of Yi Chongnip, while he was secretary-general of Taebop-sa, founded at Map’o in 1947.

Chungsan’s cosmology takes as its starting-point not the origin of the world, but its present state, which he calls *undo. Undo* appears to be a portmanteau word combining the concepts of astronomical or cosmic order and human history. Older schools of oriental thought had often held that these two concepts were related; Chungsan’s originality lies in his principle that *undo* can be affected ana improved by *ch’onji kongsa*, ‘cosmic rites’. The theory of ch’onji kongsa is derived from the idea of *cebyok*, ‘creation’. Recognizing that *undo* proceeds according to a regular pattern, Chungsan nevertheless held that it can be adjusted by *Sangje*, the ‘supreme godhead’, whose action in so doing is called ‘creation’. Moreover, undo is divided into two aeons, the present aeon, *sonch’on*, and the aeon to come, *huch’on*. We are living at the juncture of these two aeons, called *malse*, ‘the last days’. The last days are characterized by disasters, but will be succeeded by hueh’on, when there will be an earthly paradise. The transition will be due to the *ch’onji kongsa*, ‘universal cosmic rites’ of the godhead.

Chungsan’s views of spirits (or gods) and men owe much to [page 51**]** shamanism in that they distinguish the spirit and human worlds, but concede them no independent existences. The two worlds are conceived of as interdependent, the phenomena of each reflecting those of the other. Because the religious practices of Chungsangyo believers are more concerned with attaining communion with the spirits than they are with self-cultivation of any kind, they believers have been described as simple shamanists; but it would be fairer to describe their faith as a form of anthropomorphic polytheism. Not only do they not use purely shaman techniques, they have no concept of a transcendental deity, only of spirits with human attitudes and limitations (saving physical limitations). Although there are differing accounts of the details of the heavenly government structure (also known in popular taoism), all dead souls are believed eligible for appointment even to such high offices as ‘lord of the nine heavens’. There is no absolute God, only a supreme spirit with responsibility for general oversight.

The comic rites have three objects: *chedo ch’angsaeng*, the salvation of men from the disasters of these last days; *poguk anmin*, the prosperity of Korea and its establishment as a major state; and *Iwamin chongse*, the removal of existing religious error and the spiritual preparation of the people for the coming of the earthly paradise.

Hence the cosmic rites presuppose the definition of reasons for evil and confusion. Chungsan diagnosed three: the fact that the last days are a period of transition, requiring the exercise of *cebyok*, ‘creative activity’; the fact that the affinity between the human and spirit worlds is disturbed by the reflection of the spirit world’s disorders in the human world; and the fact that established religions are so self-interested and exclusive that they mislead and hinder men. In order to eradicate these *sam tae wonin*, ‘three great sources (of disorder)’, Chungsan himself performed cosmic rites according to *sam tae kanogy*, ‘three great principles’: creation of the earthly paradise and salvation of men from the disasters of the last days; improvement of relations between the human and spirit worlds by resolving the disorders of the spirit world; and helping men to achieve the above first principle through communion with the spirits. [page 52**]** Therefore the cosmic rites have three aspects, *‘sam tae kongsa’: undo kongsa*, ‘rites of cosmic order’; *sinmyong kongsa*, ‘rites of the spirits’; and *indo kongsa*, ‘rites of man’. All three aspects are necessary to the cosmic rites, which are ineffective if one aspect is lacking.

In the theory of *undo Kongsa*, rites of cosmic order, Chung-san-gyo follows the theory of the Sung astronomer Shao Kang-chieh, who reckoned one cycle of *undo* as 129,600 years, divided into two aeons of approximately 60,000 years each. The period of transition between the two is inevitably a period of creative tension, comparable to the striving growth necessary in plants before they can bear fruit. The function of cosmic rites is to adjust and promote this process, for the achievement of which the rites of cosmic order refer to four things: disasters, world government, religion, and the earth.

Rites for disasters are designed to obviate the trials of these last days by dealing with separation from the spirit world (which we will consider under the rites for religion) and with medicine. Chungsan did his utmost to avert all disasters, but believed that a strange disease was bound to appear in the Kunsan area and would rapidly exterminate the human race. As a protection agaist it, he provided mantras and paper charms, promising that their use would lead to spiritual enlightenment, healthy longevity, and power to heal by touch, sight, and speech. He set up the famous medicine cabinet and called his house a pharmacy in token of his healing promises. He gave his followers ‘prescription slips’, ‘medical warrants’, and paper charms to be used after his death. He said that even the dead could be raised to life when the great disease occured, so all nations would recognize his means of salvation, and Korea would become the center of world government.

Rites for world government are intended to rescue the world from confusion, to restore order and harmony, and to establish a utopian state. These objects imply the propagation of Chungsan-gyo and the emergence of Korea as the world’s leading nation. Political confusion in this world is held to mirror the confusion in the spirit world caused by cultural and material exchange between East and West, which had led to [page 53**]** national gods encroaching on one another’s domains. Chungsan hoped by performing appropriate rites to restore all national gods (Tan’gun of Korea, Amaterasu of Japan, Yahweh of Israel, and so on) to their own territories and confine them there; and believed that the good order thus restored would be beneficial to all. Since the displacement of local gods had geomantic repercussions, he believed that rites aimed at redressing the ensuing imbalances would improve and unify the political situation. In view of the West’s growing determination to control all Southeast Asia, Chungsan assigned responsibility for stemming the western tide to the Japanese. He is claimed to have weakened the western powers by dispatching Korean spirits to provoke World War I, and by his rites to have protected China and Korea from Russia by instigating the Russo-Japanese War and raising a ‘south-easterly breeze’ that defeated the Russians. For the proper ordering of East Asia he confided the government of Korea to the spirit of Chou Rong-jun, leader of the 1894 Tonghak rebellion; that of China to Kim Ilbu, his own mentor; and that of Japan to Ch’oe Cheu.

China and Korea, however, were so crippled by maladministration that for the time being he left them in the hands of other countries. Korea was to be the responsibility of Japan, to resolve the grudge felt in the spirit world by the Japanese from what had happened during the period after Hideyoshi’s invasion—but the Japanese were to leave Korea empty-handed. Hence Koreans were to treat Japanese with courtesy.

Chungsan had arranged for spirits from the west to be brought by sea to Korea to prepare her to be the chief nation of the world; and for China to repay all the tribute she had received from Korea by sending *poun-sin*, ‘spirits of gratitude’, to Korea. Since he had removed the spirit of imperial power from the Emperor Kwang-hsu to Korea, and prophesied that China would succumb to two Sino-Japanese wars and intercourse with the west, he found himself obliged to commit China to the Russian military. (Some of his followers explain communism’s success in China as the fulfilment of this prophecy.)

In the forthcoming struggle for world leadership, he [page54**]** declared, the most gifted country would emerge as suzerain. Japan would perish by fire and the West by water. Some have claimed that this was a prophecy of the atomic bomb, and even that Chungsan performed cosmic rites for protection against atomic explosion. (He ordered Ch’oe Ch’angjo to kill and cook a pig, and prepare a suit of clothing. Kim Hyongyol and two others were told to visit Ch’oe’s house, and each don one of the three garments of the suit. They were then to dig a pit before the main gate of the house one night; set a brazier and a bowl of water beside it; throw the boiled pork over the brazier into the pit; after the pork throw in rice-wine, octopus, more pork, and finally bean-curd; then cover the lot with earth. As they did all this, there was a thunder shower and a flash of lightning. Chungsan said he had buried the ‘ball of fire’ from heaven, lest a mountain-sized ball of fire should burn the world to ashes. This is understood as the vanquishing of the atomic bomb.)

The gifted country that would govern the world was, of course, Korea, and its definitive gift would be his own magical skills, medicine, and doctrine. To assist in preparing the Korean paradise he recalled to Korea the spirit of Chinmuk, who had gone with other spirits to enlighten the west. (Chinmuk—1562-1633—was a Korean monk who was supposed to have visited India in spirit. While his soul was away the envious Kim Pongg-ok borrowed his powers to bury his body, so Chinmuk’s soul became a wandering ghost.) Likewise, because Matteo Ricci, the sixteenth-century Jesuit missionary, although he had railed to establish a western paradise in China, had managed to export the spirits of eastern culture to Europe, Chungsan ordered them to return. He gathered together all the spirits of imperial and royal power to work under his guidance to make Korea the rulin gcountry of the world.

*Oson wigi tosu kongsa*, ‘rite of the five immortal *paduk* players’, was performed at a geomantically favorable grave-site on Hoe-mun mountain near Sunch’ang, and was intended to restore harmony between the human and spirit worlds. It supposed that five immortals were playing *paduk*, the pebble game. The host was Korean, two spirits―his guests―played the game, and two sat by watching and commenting. When the game was over and [page 55**]** the guests left, the pebbles and checker-board would remain as the property of the host. Therefore the Koreans had only to be good hosts and the whole world would become their property.

Rites for religion amount to the exposition and propagation of doctrine. Chungsan once wrote: ‘Form of Buddhism, world of taoism, morals of Confucianism’; and in the *Taegyong* (Chapter 8), he says:

Taoism, Buddhism, Confucianism, and Christianity are the sources of the world’s various culture. Ch’oe Cheu will be leader of taoism, Chinmuk of Buddhism, Chu Hsi of Confucianism, and Matteo Ricci of Christianity. They will distil the essences of these faiths, control the spirits of religion and culture, and bring all nations together in a single *tao*.

He never explained what he meant by ‘form of Buddhism’. He declared that when he first descended to earth as Lord of the Nine Heavens, he had come to the ‘thousand-story pagoda of the country of the great law’; and the second time he had come for thirty years to live in the Maitreya statue at Kumsan-sa, where he would be again after his death. (Since ‘country of the ereat law’, *ta-fa-kuo*, is a Chinese locution for France, some believers say the first descent was on the Eiffel Tower in 1840—though it was not built till 1870; the second, however, unquestionably indicates his identification of himself with Buddhist teaching.)

His taoist world is easily understood. The cosmic rites used incantations and magic diagrams, presupposing a magical ascesis, a potential unity between spirits and men, and a concern for immortality that all derive from taoism.

His ethics were straightforwardly Confucian, with the five virtues of benevolence, justice, propriety, wisdom, and sincerity; and ideals of loyalty, filial piety, and wifely chastity.

He claimed that Ch’oe Cheu had received his spiritual powers from him while he was in the Kumsan-sa Maitreya. Tonghak [page56**]** believers called Ch’oe *taesonsaeng*, ‘great teacher’, but Chungsan was *taesonsaeng*. ‘teacher of the ages’. His syncretism and his rituals certainly owed much to Tonghak, as did his identification of himself as *haemyong sin*, ‘spirit of deliverance’, and Ch’oe as poun sin, ‘spirit of gratitude’.

He linked himself with Christianity by saying he was the Christ of the Second Advent, come in response to Matteo Ricci’s desires.

His concern with shamanism is shown in the story that he once beat the drum for his concubine Ko to dance like a shaman; he declared it was a performance of cosmic significance; that she was a shaman and he an adept, both of the highest decree; and that life depended on shaman rituals.

His rites concerning *undo, kaehyok*, and the two aeons, and his theory of Korea’s future world leadership were all based on the yin-yang theory, *feng-shui* geomancy, and magic diagrams.

He declared that all matters should be handled according to the taoist principle of *wu-wei-i-hua*, ‘transformation by nonaction’, and that he would set the world to rights and establish paradise by applying that principle. He said that if the Hideyoshi invasion had been tackled by the contemporary adept Ch’oe P’unghon, it would not have lasted more than three days; that Chinmuk would have needed three months; but the Confucian Song Kubong would have needed eight months. Clearly he regarded taoist magic as the highest form of religious power. Indeed, he compared himself to the T’ang adept Lu Tung-pin.

In spite of his syncretistic claims he never made positive use of Buddhist or Confucian doctrine. His attitude to them was, in fact, negative. His ‘form of Buddhism’ has no relation to Buddhist doctrine of deliverance from attachement to forms, nor to the attainment of buddhahood. In a poem he went so far as to subordinate Buddhists to Confucians, but expressed a low view of Confucianism when he said: “I intended Ch’oe Cheu to save mankind, but because he could not free himself from Confucianism, I had to come to earth myself.”

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Such vague and unsystematic syncretism not only renders Chungsan’s doctrine very hard to describe; it was a significant factor in the development of Chungsan-gyo schisms. Every group emphasized one or other element in the religious amalgam. Inevitably there were doctrinal conflicts, with a recognized opposition between ‘truth’ and ‘confusion’, it was held by some that Chungsan had deliberately created a confused system, foreseeing that truth would emerge out of it. There is even a story that he performed a cosmic rite in which he announced to nine disciples that he was creating the future schisms, and said that confusion was necessary, because of man’s need to express anger when frustrated, which predicated the necessity for confusion, out of which men could freely distinguish true principles.

He is reported to have prophesied that the confusion would last for twenty-seven years, because one Hong Songmun had studied in vain for twenty-seven years on Hoemun mountain near Sun’chang. Twenty-seven years after Chungsan’s death was 1936, when Ch’a Kyongsok, founder of Poch’on-gyo, died; but the confusion continues still, each sect claiming sole guardianship of ‘truth’. On another occasion, in 1909, concluding the cosmic rites, Chungsan said that fifty years was the term of mission work; so many believe that the eschatological prophecies of Chungsan were to be fulfilled after fifty years. There are various ways of computing the date, and many ways of preparing for the end. Some construe the fifty years as between 1860 (Choe Cheu’s spiritual enlightenment) and 1909 (Chungsan’s death); others prefer 1901 (Chungsan’s enlightenment) to 1950; or 1909 to 1959. Those who were disappointed in 1959 made a revised calculation and produced 1964 as the fatal year, but when it passed without event, they found reasons for fearing 1968. Concern about the date of the last day is very much part of Chungsan-gyo.

Chungsan held that never-ending wars are due to lack of harmony between local spirits and the destiny of the earth. He performed rites to produce that harmony: *Chiun t’ongil kongsa*, rites of the earth. First he abolished *wangu*n, traditionally known arcane principles of geomancy, by preparing new geomantic patterns for the aeon to come. He tried, for instance, to divert [page 58**]** attention from traditional geomancy by dispersing the influences of Chong at Kyeryong-san, Cho at Kaya-san, and Pom at Ch’il- san, all described in *Chonggam-nok*. To unify his new geomantic influences he performed rites at the house of his disciple Hwang Ungjong, co-ordinating all the earth forces of Cholla province by making Moak mountain of Chonju and Hoeman mountain of Sunch’ang the parent peaks from which rivers and other mountains would derive their power. He wrote out a statement about the influences of Cholla mountains and ritually burnt it, to effect the new geomantic pattern he was preparing for the new aeon.

He extended this principle from his native province to international geography. Claiming that Korea had suffered because the geomantic forces of Japan created aggression and greed in the Japanese, he decided to rectify those forces. At a smithy in Sinho (otherwise called Sinbangjuk, a hamlet at T’aein, near Chongup) he performed a rite in which he burnt a paper with a punning inscription. The pun involved the Korean pronunciation of the name of the city of Kobe, which is Shinho, and the transference of strong forces to Korea. He summoned the forces of Kuwol, Tan’gun’s holy mountain in North Korea, to the grave sites of Ch’a Kyongsok’s ancestors; the spirit of Matteo Ricci to Mudung mountain near Kwangju; and the spirit of Ch’oe Cheu to Sunch’ang. Furthermore, he summoned the lethal forces of the 12,000 peaks of the Diamond Mountains, to prepare for the appearance of 12,000 perfect believers.

All of which sufficiently illustrates Chungsan’s interest in geomancy.

*Sinmyong kongsa* are cosmic rites of the spirits. These are basic to Chungsan-gyo, as will be clear from what has been said of the importance of the spirit world in the rites for religion. The spirit world contains all kinds of heavenly and earthly spirits, including the souls of the dead, who are presumed to hold in the spirit world the same rank and dignity as they held in this life. Our fortunes here depend on the welfare of our ancestral spirits, the welfare of this world depends on good order in the spirit [page 59**]** world. This good order is ensured by three kinds of cosmic rite: placatory (*sinmyong haewon*), distributory (*sinmyong paech’i*), and unificatory (*sinmyong t’ongil*).

Placatory rites are thought to have been the first performed by Chungsan. They are based on the practice of Korean shamans in domestic rites for arresting evil and inviting blessings. But Chungsan thought he could influence the affairs of this world by satisfying the spirits, and to that end he held rites to placate Tan Chu, the son of the mythical emperor Yao, who was not allowed to succeed his father, and was therefore angry; Matteo Ricci; and Ch’oe Cheu.

Such rites were performed with food: pure water, rice, cakes, rice-wine, steamed rice, sweet fermented rice (sikhye), fruit, dried and fresh fish, and meat―oxhead, oxtail, goat’s blood, pork, dogmeat, according to the place and season. Offerings were made of money and grain, cotton cloth, clothes, and straw sandals. Yellow loam was scattered on the floor; a barrier of tabu ropes was set up; magic diagrams were pasted on the walls; a ‘spirit-generars flag’ was hoisted; paper lanterns, bells, drums of different sizes, begging-monks’ hoods, bows and arrows, and other shaman equipment were used. Prayer papers and paper charms were burnt; incantations and mantras were read, songs and dances performed. There were dramatic presentations such as the portrayal of war by all the participants tying white cloths on their heads and shins, and carrying long tobacco pipes over their shoulders while they marched out through the kitchen carrying flaming paper torches, then returned, imitating gunshot noises and pretending to use the pipes as rifles. Paper charm burning was a constant element in the rites.

The spirits were not driven away, as they are by shamans; only placated. The effect was not merely prophylactic, but held to have a higher moral significance for both the spirit world and for this world. This significance depends on the fact that peace cannot exist so lone as individuals seek revenge or redress, but will increase in proportion to the degree that individuals console one another. Placation and consolation produce mutual understanding and forbearance, so all placatory actions improve [page 60**]** peace. Chungsan’s placatory rites, by inducing peace in the spirit world, morally influenced the world of men, and would eventually create a utopian order and unity.

The distributory rites were necessary because the spirits, when placated, find themselves in suspense, and cannot begin to show gratitude to men until they have been appointed to responsible offices. Hence Chungsan sent Korean spirits to the west to help Korea and ward off western aggression; and summoned western spirits to the Orient to strengthen Korea’s position. We have already described how he appointed guardian spirits to the principal eastern countries.

It still remained necessary to perform a rite welding all the newly appointed spirits into a unified organization. Chungsan, as Lord of the Nine Heavens, presided over this organization. He worked in three stages. Firstly, all the national, racial, and regional spirits (such as Tan’gun for Korea) were to be united, so that their respective peoples could live in peace. Secondly, the culture spirits, such as Confucius, Sakyamuni, Christ, Mahommed, and Socrates, who continue to function as sages in the spirit world, were to be united. Once they combine in the spirit world, strife between religions, between idealism and materialism, capitalism and communism will end in our world. A syncretic fusion of doctrines in the heavenly world will stimulate the creation of the earthly paradise. Lastly, men’s ancestral spirits must be united, because concord among them would bring concord among their living descendants. One ancestral spirit representative of each clan was to participate in a heavenly court, chonsang kongjong or okkyong, to moderate the action of their descendants.

The rites of man were to help men repent of their sins and prepare for the life of the earthly paradise. Seven basic principles were involved.

1. By religious exercises a man can be spiritualized to the point of communicating with the spirit world, understanding all the secrets of the universe, and being united body and soul in one divine being. This differs from any Christian concept [page 61**]** of sharing in divine nature, from buddhahood, and from taoist immortalization. It is primarily a mental state, virtually the same as enlightenment. The necessary religious exercise is incantation, which also produces spirit possession, ‘spirit sight’ and ‘spirit hearing’. There are two methods: *chongnyok t’ong*, ‘enlightenment by effort’ attained by striving; and *kamhwa t’ong*, ‘enlightenment by inspiration’, in which incantatory exercises prepare for the sudden opening of the ‘gate of illumination’, *tot’ong-mun*, by the external action of spirits at the moment of *kaebyok*. Some of the sects, such as Taedohoe, emphasized enlightenment by effort, but Poch’on-gyo and others preferred enlightenment by inspiration.

The sects differ as to the texts, types of formula, and prescribed days for incantation; and have developed different theories on the subject. Chungsan himself taught the recitation of a simple Chinese sentence: ‘Great ruler that infuses all things, come and be joined to me!’ Some say this is an invocation of electricity, and in Poch’on-gyo an electricity-room was installed, modelled on its heavenly counterpart. The Maitreya group held a simulated electric wire during incantations, expecting to receive a current of inspiration. Chungsan, however, thought incantation would stabilize the mind’ saying “The cure for serious ills is peace of mind and body.”

2. Placation and gratitude, as a moral and beatifying principle, applies to both men and spirits (as described earlier). Among Chungsan’s dicta on this subject are:

‘One man’s discontent can ruin the universe.’

‘Loving an enemy like a benefactor is a virtue that brings blessings.’

‘Requiting evil with evil is like shedding blood to wash blood stains.’

‘It is wicked to forget one’s king, one’s father, or one’s teacher.’

These illustrate both placation and gratitude, as did the two [page 62**]** texts he pasted on the wall during cosmic rites, naming Ch’oe Cheu as the spirit of gratitude and himself as the spirit of placation. The two ideas are reciprocal.

3. Benevolence and justice, mutual support and help are key terms in Confucianism. Chungsan’s version of them is: ‘Benevolence means not exercising partiality in love or hate; justice means not seeing the truth in black and white.’ This is the doctrine of the mean. He said he would teach men how to live together by the exercise of benevolence and justice, which would produce mutual support and help.

4. All the Confucian virtues were to be cultivated, but because the future would have a classless society, widows would be free to remarry, and monogamy would be the rule, Chungsan performed cosmic rites for ‘the rectification of ethics and clarification of virtues’, chongnyun myongdok.

5. Singlemindedness, sincerity, reverence, and faith are essential for spiritual training. Without them there can be no illumination and no intercourse with spirits. ‘Singlemindedness can achieve anything’, and ‘Only the singleminded can live’, are two of Chungsan’s sayings. Devout integrity is necessary for success, for blessings, for morality, even for life itself.

6. Immortality means extension of life. In the aeon to come, men will be thirteen feet tall and live at least 800 years, in unbounded bliss. Chungsan said: ‘The world thinks mere longevity is bliss, and rates longevity higher than happiness; so I prefer bliss to longevity, for without it a man perishes.’

7. Chungsan insisted on the equality of the sexes. According to the principle of placation, women should be released from their millennia of subservience, and Korean social customs should be radically changed. He preached monogamy, permission for widows to remarry, and obligatory remarriage for widowers in the coming aeon. He performed cosmic rites to give men’s rights to women, including setting an amulet in the groin of his baby daughter Sunim and declaring that [page 63**]** she now had male genitals. He also instituted grandiose titles for women.

The ultimate object of all the cosmic rites was the establishment of the earthly paradise, by the process of *kaebyok*, creation. Some of the details of the paradise are specific.

The cycles of the sun and moon will change. Night and day will be of constant duration, heat and cold reduced to a single norm. Men and spirits will live in constant communion; the spirits will be docile; all men will be clarvoyant, knowing past, present ana future, and the whole of space, without effort.

The whole human race will become one family, with equality of the sexes, and all agreeing on all subjects. Armies and punishments will disappear. Only two classes will remain: officials and others. But officials will never exceed their authority, so the people will live contentedly. Greed, lust, anger, and idleness will disappear, as men live in untrammelled virtue and happiness.

Without disease and death, men will be forever young. Poverty and wealth will be done away with: food and clothing will be issued from the warehouses as required. Disasters by fire, wind, and water will be unknown. Rice will be cooked without fire; agriculture will not dirty the hands: seeds once sown will spring up again year after year, and all soil will be richly fertile.

A lantern set up in the house of an adept will keep a whole village as bright as daylight. A steam engine will travel 10,000 miles in an instant. Men will ride the clouds at will, ascending easily, because the heavens will be lower. Door-rings, coat- hangers, and sandals will be made of gold.

Human life will be reverenced more than it now is; because in the present aeon, an age of heroes, men live by sin, but in the aeon to come, an age of sages, men will live by virtue.

This earthly paradise is modelled on a spiritual prototype. Chungsan’s followers believe it will soon be set up, and point to [page 64**]** such modern developments as respect for human rights, space travel, electricity, and emancipation of women as stages in its fulfilment.

4. Incantations and Charms

Mantras and paper charms figured largely in Chungsan’s cosmic rites and in his training of disciples. He also stuck paper charms on walls and pillars for protection against disease and evil spirits- He used a book of predictions in conjunction with them. His various sects use these things in different ways, but they all use them. To some extent they are used as magic, but they are also used as prayers more strictly understood. Here is another sign of Ghungsan’s debt to shamanism.

A mantra is a verbal formula recited with the intent of gaining a specific ooject. In Chungsan-gyo it has power to subdue evil spirits, or, in cosmic rites, to invoke spirits. Chungsan recited mantras, wrote them on paper and burnt them, and even wrote them on ‘spirit general’s flags’. He rescued Kim Sunguk from disaster with the T’aeul mantra, and Chang Hyosun with the Unjang mantra. He did not restrict himself to one or two simple mantras, as Tonghak did, but collected many, adaptable to all conceivable circumstances. lie made up his own mantras as required. For instance^ he once wrote out a list of different types of shaman terms on a slip of paper and called it a mantra ; and he gave personal mantras to individuals. There is no discernible system in his teaching ofincantation.

Yet the T’aeul mantra is the principal one. Chungsan learnt it early on, during his pilgrimage in search of truth, when he found a copy of Kim Kyongso, s T’aeul-gyohg at Piin in south Ch’ungch’ong. rvim Kyongso was a sixteenth-century Korean who sought enlightenment in vain for fifty years, but was not enlightened till he used the Buddhist mantra against disease. (Chungsan’s followers say it was learned by Asanga in a dream, when he heard Maitreya present it to Sakyamuni.) The formula is *T’aeul ch’onsang won’gun* (‘T’aeul, high king of heaven!’). Kim’s enlightement was never complete, though he left a record of it in *T’aeul-g yong*.

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Chungsan thought the T’aeul mantra and the Sich’on mantra were the best he had collected, but that the one was marred by Kim Kyongso’s fifty years of frustration, and the other weakened by fifty years of use in Tonghak. So, to placate Kim Kyongso, he prefixed the words *Humch’i, humch’i* to the disease mantra, and combined it with the T’aeul mantra, to make his own formula. Humch’i is taken from a Chinese Buddhist mantra believed to ward off evil spirits. It is a transliteration of a Sanskrit word, said to represent the cry of a calf as it is being born, and hence a symbol of Gautama’s power and of the world to come. Since T’aeul is a taoist deity, Chungsan’s mantra combines Buddhist and taoist elements, and its original power was prophylactic against disease.

Like Ch’oe Cheu, Chungsan made wide use of paper charms of the kind used by Korean shamans, called *pu, pujok, or puso*. His followers interpret them variously: as simple prophylactics; as spiritual records or ‘spirit writings’; as encoded statements of the regulation of undo by cosmic rites; as powers to raise the dead; as arcane statements about the earthly paradise, to be reverenced like Chungsan himself.

Judging by my own collection, they fall into three groups: those with Chinese characters, those with diagrams or drawings, and those combining characters and diagrams. Some of the written ones are simple brief texts, but some are larger, usually extracts from Chungsan’s own compilation Iiyonmu-gyong or Pyongse-mun. Some are written from left to right, that is to say, in reverse. The drawings include faces, spirals, squares, stars, plants, birds, and animals.

They were used as house charms, pasted on thresholds and door-posts; as amulets carried on the person, usually in a ‘medicine purse’; as medicine, by burning them, then swallowing the ashes in water (especially in Poch’on-gyo); for burning at all sorts of rites (especially in the Pommun sect where there is a daily ritual of burning a charm form *Hyonmu-gyong* selected according to the date in the sixty-day Chinese cycle); as written prayers; and on the *sinjang-gi*, the ‘spirit general’s flag’, set up at group functions to attract the spirit general and gain his protection. [page 66**]** (It is a large paper flag with the T’aeul mantra and Sich’on mantra written on it. Other charms are stuck on the flag-pole.)

Most charms are drawn or written with black ink, but house charms and amulets are often in red.

Most of the charms are derived from the two collections already mentioned. *Hyonmu-gyong* consists of twenty-four charms. Together with *Pyongse-mun*, ‘description of the powers of diseases’, it was compiled by Chungsan at Ch’a Kyongsok’s house in 1909, shortly before he died. As the only surviving works from the master’s hand, they are zelaously studied, and believed to contain the kernel of his teaching. Sunch’on-gyo in particular lays great stress on this book, treating it as a sacred scripture— hence the name Pommun-p’a, ‘lawbook sect’.

*Pyongse-mun*, also called *Uit’ong-gam*, divides all diseases into great and small. The great diseases are fundamentally moral and psychological, deriving from moral deficiencies. There is no medicine for them, save the beneficent influence of holy men. Small diseases are physical, and amenable to medical treatment. Chungsan’s medicine combines taoist salvation principles with ordinary therapy.