

# Haewon-sangsaeng as a Religio-Ethical\* Metaphor



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**Original Articles**

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## Abstract

This paper deals with figurative meanings of *Haewon-sangsaeng*. It is an investigation which is both semantic and diachronic. In the first part, important implications of *sangsaeng* (or *xiangsbeng* in Chinese) in the context of correlative cosmology are extensively explored. Among others, *saeng* (in Chinese *sbeng*) as a powerful metaphor and its related Chinese compounds are broadly discussed. In the second part, the evolution of ideas of *yuan* (or *won* in Korean) in Chinese history is explicated. Above all, in the traditional Chinese cultural milieu, wrongful treatments which make victims feel themselves aggrieved are socio-politically orientated. *The Scripture on Great Peace (Taiping Jing)* is used as reference point to elucidate the essential points of *yuan* and its knots. However, the advent of Buddhism in East Asia adds a new dimension to the understanding of *yuan* (*won*). Accumulated *yuan* as karmic bond thus gives a new identity of *yuan* as predetermined animosity. Widely recognized idioms like “adverse relatives and karmic debtors” and indigenous Chinese Buddhist rituals like *Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang* bear witness to this transformation of the meaning of *yuan* in East Asia. The fruitful yet correlated meanings of *yuan* also make the endeavor of untying *yuan* deeply significant and important to human society. *Haewon-sangsaeng*, as a religio-ethical ideal, brings out an amicable and harmonious relationship among myriad beings in the cosmos.

**Keywords:** saeng; sangsaeng; yuan (won); yuanjie; jieyuan

All of us are living now in a period of opposition; it is important that we may hope for the transformation of opposition into fellowship.

(Richard Wilhelm 1979, 25)

Na hi verena verāni/  
sammantīdha kudācanam//  
averena ca sammanti/  
esa dhammo sanantano//

(Never ever are enmities ceased through enmity in this world.

They are ceased through non-enmity. This is the eternal dharma.)

(Dhammapada, *Yamakavaggo*, 5)

## Introduction: Ideals of Daesoon Jinrihoe

In *The Canonical Scripture* of Daesoon Jinrihoe, the relationship among modalities of existence in the universe is powerfully articulated in the four tenets with four-character phrase each, that is, *Eumyang-hapdeok* (陰陽合德, Virtuous Concordance of Ying and Yang), *Shinin-jabwah* (神人調化, Harmonious Union of Divine Beings and Human Beings), *Haewon-sangsaeng* (解冤相生, Resolution of Grievance for the Mutual Beneficence) and *Dotong-jingyeong* (道通真境, Perfected State of Unification with the Dao). The first three tenets – Virtuous Concordance of Ying and Yang, Harmonious Union of Divine Beings and Human Beings, Resolution of Grievance for the Mutual Beneficence – express a meaningful relationship that is not in dualistic opposition, but mutual complementarity. The last phrase-the pervasiveness of Dao in the universe-summarizes an ideal world when the above goals are fully accomplished.

Clearly, what is proposed above for an ideal world sketches out a striking feature of East Asian way of thinking. In this mode of thought, opposites constitute harmony, i.e., the relationship between male and female, divine being and human being, grievance and beneficence is cooperative. To reach harmony is to avoid dualistic discord. Thus, man and woman are not antagonistic but supportive to each other. Divine being and human being can be unified. Animosity will be untangled by benevolence. Ultimately, truth prevails and humanity manifests.

Moreover, there are three phases of coordination in terms of cosmic efforts before a state of perfection is achieved. The male-female relationship is the first one to be reconciled. The inseparable tie between divine world and human world comes next. The third stage is the dissolution of enmity among beings in the universe. This is decisive and the final step before the renewal of cosmic order. Terrestrial paradise would emerge once reordering of the universe is complete.

## Sangsaeng and Correlative Cosmology

In East Asia, especially in China and Korea, the above mode of thought is prevalent in their cultural orientations. It is a way of thinking in which the perfection of cosmic order is predicated on the excellence of human order. There is a correlative relation between human world and cosmic order. Human order and comic order are organically connected and interdependent. This mode of thought is generally termed correlative cosmology. Schwartz defined correlative cosmology in the following way:

It is a kind of anthropocosmology in which entities, processes, and classes of phenomena found in nature correspond to or “go together with” various entities, processes, and classes of phenomena in human world.<sup>1</sup> (Schwartz 1985, 351)

In other words, human world and natural world are participating in an organic progression to make an interconnected cosmos. However, the cosmos is not created but self-generating without an ordainer. There is no cosmogony in the strictest sense of the term in ancient China as god on high (上帝) is not the creator of the universe but the guardian of the world. Most important, it is a process in which a closed and definite correlation between human order and natural order is posed. Schwartz also argued:

The essential preoccupation lying behind the correlative cosmology seems to be that of finding in the homologies between human and natural phenomena a means of controlling human civilization as well as human individual life by “aligning” them with cycles, rhythms, and patterns of the natural realm. (Schwartz 1985, 355)

The correlation and coordination between the cosmic order and human realm constitutes a fundamental principle of the universe. It is a definitive law which regulates the universe. In the end, this cosmic process of spiritual development also leads to great peace or harmony. Moreover, in this correlative mode of discourse, an opposing relationship between two modalities of being becomes inseparable companionship to make the whole possible. It is a paired relationship which forms a complementary binary. Thus, male and female are not antagonistic but keep company with one another to make a meaningful ensemble.<sup>2</sup> Clearly, this mode of thought is based on the principles of complementarity. To be sure, it is not a way of thinking in which transcendence of dualistic opposition is overcome by encompassing the opposite. Rather, it is a holistic sort of thought and concordance is achieved by making opposites conjointly complementary. Male and female surely display a polarity. However, what distinguishes this polarity is that the grouping of two opposites makes an integral

whole. Bodde pointed out that the harmonizing of opposites is one of the distinguishing features in Chinese philosophy. He said:

It should be evident that basic among Chinese thought patterns is the desire to merge conflicting elements into a unified harmony. Chinese philosophy is filled with dualism in which, however, their two component elements are usually regarded as complementary and mutually necessary rather than hostile and incompatible. (Bodde 1981, 272)

Consequently, the metaphor concerning these two opposites is a harmonious union of *yin* and *yang* which gives birth to myriad beings. The metaphor of “giving birth” (生, *sheng*) or procreation is central in the cosmic unfolding.<sup>3</sup> It is said in the *Tao Te Ching*:

The Tao gives birth to One. One gives birth to Two. Two gives to Three. Three gives birth to all things.

All things have their backs to the female and stand facing the male. When male and female combine, all things achieve harmony.”<sup>4</sup> (Chapter 42, trans. by Mitchell)

It is the metaphor of procreation rather than that of creation which provides the central meaning of *Tao*. *Tao* (Dao) or cosmic order is not created *ex nihilo* in traditional Chinese cosmology. The union between the male and the female establishes a harmonious bond and procreation begins. It is a relationship of two-in-one. In fact, this mode of thought is clearly articulated in the *Book of Changes* (《易經》, *I Ching*, *Yijing*). Wilhelm called this mode of discourse “opposition and fellowship” in his exploration of the philosophy of the *I Ching*:

Opposition and fellowship complement one another; opposites are necessary for the individual to comprehend himself, and fellowship is necessary for the individual to find his sphere of activity. By complementing one another, a work that continues the past and passes something on to the future is completed. In this sense, what is to come is not mere illusion, and time does not merely elapse, but becomes *Kainos* [turning point, the moment of decision], meaningful time—that is, time capable of asserting the moment in reality when contrasted with eternity. (Wilhelm 1979: 23)

Opposition and fellowship are basic principles of life and cosmos. They are integral to a fruitful life and meaningful cosmology. It is opposition which makes harmonious

union (fellowship) possible. Here, *sheng* is an absolutely key notion. Closely related to this idea is the concept of continuity of being (or engenderment and re-engenderment, *sheng-sheng*: 生生). It is said in the *Appendix of the Book of Change* 《周易·繫辭上》: “Continuity of being is called the process of change.”<sup>5</sup> The growth and transformation of the cosmic process begins with the metaphor of *sheng*. Chou Tun-i added some comments on above passage in his *Diagrammatic Explanation of Tai-chi* (《太極圖說》, *Tai Chi Tu Shou*): “The interaction of these two *ch'i* (Yin and Yang) engenders and transforms myriad things. The myriad things produce and reproduce, resulting in an unending transformation.”<sup>6</sup> (Tu 1985, 44) Tu in his essay on “The Continuity of Being: Chinese Visions of Nature” argued:

An obvious consequence of this basic belief [continuity of being] is the all-embracing nature of the so-called spontaneously self-generating life process. Strictly speaking, it is not because the Chinese have no idea of God external to the created cosmos that they have no choice but to accept the cosmogony as an organismic process. Rather, it is precisely because they perceive the cosmos as the unfolding of continuous creativity that it cannot entertain” conceptions of creation *ex nihilo* by the hand of God, or through the will of God, and all other such mechanistic, teleological, and theistic cosmologies.” The Chinese commitment to the continuity of being, rather than the absence of creation myth, prompts them to see nature as “the all-unfolding harmony of impersonal cosmic functions.” (Tu 1985, 36)

The idea of continuity of being also gives rise to the connection between the self and others, and this mutual relationship eventually expands to Heaven and Earth. It is a cosmological correlation and in this process of extension, human beings partake a certain reality of the divine. Also, it involves a process of mutual interaction among all cosmic beings. This vision of the continuity of being is vital for us to understand the gravity of the metaphor of *sheng* in Chinese intellectual tradition, both Confucianism and Taoism. (cf. Tu 1985, 35-50) Witnessing from the ideal of *haewon-sangsaeng*, continuity of being as a cosmological metaphor is also utterly fundamental in Korean intellectual history.

It has to be pointed out that the idea of *sheng* (生 or *saeng* in Korean) gives to that of *xiangsheng* (相生 or *sangsaeng* in Korean) and from *xiangsheng* to *xiangke* (相剋 or *sanggeuk* in Korean). Evidently, *xiangsheng* and *xiangke* are two situations antagonistic to each other to make the cosmological order (生序, *Sheng-xu*) a complete whole. *Xiangsheng* is a situation in which two elements of natural force reinforce each other. *Xiangke* is a state of affairs in which two elements of natural force counteract each other. *Xiangsheng* could be translated as mutually supportive or reciprocal

engenderment and *xiangke* could be translated as reciprocally restricting or mutual conquest. These two ideas or metaphors are always jointly accompanied in nature and human history. The ideas of mutually supportive or reciprocally restricting of natural force first appeared in the doctrines of five elements or phases (五行) of cosmic force. There are five elements of natural force in the universe, that is; water, fire, metal, wood and earth. Relations among them could be either mutually supportive or reciprocally restricting.

Basically, the five elements theory is as the following. There are five material elements or phases and their cyclical progression produces dynamic movements of human history. In conjunction with natural phenomena and seasonal changes, the five elements or phases as mentioned above which, form two parallel cycles: the cycle of reciprocal engenderment and the cycle of mutual conquest. In the cycle of reciprocal engenderment, one element engenders its successor by following a prescribed pattern of succession that accords with natural interconnections. For example, water nourishes the trees (wood), and then burning wood makes fire. By contrast, in the cycle of mutual conquest, one element destroys its predecessor. For example, water extinguishes fire, and then fire melts metal.<sup>7</sup> Schwartz said:

Within the material elements series, the concept of “mutual conquest” [*xiangke*] relation among earth/wood/metal/fire/water was...probably based on simple natural observation such as the observation that vegetation “overcomes” earth by drawing its sustenance from it; that metal overcomes wood as when a sharp ax can be used to fell trees; fire melts metal; water extinguishes fire; and earth can somehow conquers water (by drainage or absorption?) The correlates in the realm of nature associated with each of the elements may include colors, seasons, or cardinal directions and in the human realms such categories as ethical qualities, departments of governments, the governing principles of a dynasty, and even various aspects of individual life. (Schwartz 1985, 362)

Evidently, both *xiangsbeng* and *xiangke* here are not merely manifestations of relation among natural forces, but also metaphors for human affairs and ethical consequences. Analogically, relation among modalities of being could also be expressed either in mutual subjugation or reciprocal engenderment. Mutual conquest or subjugation, is the situation in which a conflict of interest arises among them. Mutual engenderment is a state in which harmony is reached among members concerned. It is important to note here that reciprocal engenderment is not a state of purely co-existence, but more positively as a state of mutually supportive or reciprocally flourishing. It is an age of peace and harmony. Mutual conquest or subjugation is the

situation that conflicts dominate. This is a time that the world and human condition are in chaos. According to Daesoon Jinrihoe, an age of suffering and adversity is characterized by *xiangke* which preferably is to be superseded by that of *xiangsbeng* (or K. *sangsaeng*) forever. It is said in *The Canonical Scripture*:

The world has been filled with grievances and grudges because mutual contention has prevailed over human affairs in the Former World. Accordingly, the Three Realms of Heaven, Earth and Humankind have been obstructed from contacting one another, which has led this world to wretched calamities. This is the reason for the lack of renewal of the Three Realms. (*Prophetic Elucidations* 1: 8)<sup>8</sup>

As the “Former World” (先天, *seoncheon*) is an age of chaos characterized by sharp and bloody conflict, the “Later World” (後天, *hoocheon*) is distinguished by harmony and mutual beneficence. The pervasion of Dao in the paradise is the time when knots of enmity and resentment are untangled and reciprocal engenderment of all life is achieved.<sup>9</sup> It is also said in *The Canonical Scripture*:

Sangje said to Kim Hyeong-Ryeol: “In the Former World, as all creations were ruled by mutual contention (相剋, *sanggeuk*), grievances and grudges have been accumulating, condensing, and filing up the Three Realms. Heaven and Earth, losing the constant Dao, are overwhelmed with all kinds of disasters and calamities, and the world has fallen into wretchedness. To save all the people in this world, I will resolve the grievances and grudges from time immemorial by recalibrating the Degree Number of Heaven and Earth, harmonizing divine beings, and establishing the Later World’s paradisiacal land of immortals which will be based on the principle of mutual beneficence (相生, *sangsaeng*). The grievances must be resolved by the Dao of gods in every small and large matter. If first I solidify and harmonize Degree Numbers, then human affairs shall naturally unfold in accordance with that action. This is indeed the Reordering Works of the Three Realms.” Then Sangje undertook part of Reordering Works of Myeongbu (the spirit world). (*Reordering Works* 1: 3)<sup>10</sup>

Clearly, the Former World is allied with way of *sanggeuk* and the Later World is linked with *sangsaeng*. This new perspective of *sangsaeng* and *sanggeuk* is different from the original correlative cosmology in traditional China where *sangsaeng* and *sanggeuk* inexorably take turns in the unfolding of universal political history. In correlative cosmology, it is the circulation of different phases that explains the changes of dynasties



and this rotation seems inescapable. Schwartz discussed Tsou Yen's (c. 305-240 BCE) ideas of correlative relation between different Chinese dynasties and five elements and said:

Tsou Yen's most well-known theory was his correlation of five elements with the cyclical patterns of history. According to this theory, under the Yellow Emperor the "dominant" prevailing element had been the element of earth, together with all its concomitant homologies. Under Yü, the founder of Hsia Dynasty, there had been an ascendancy of wood (or vegetation); under the Shang Dynasty, an ascendancy of metal; and under the Chou, an ascendancy of fire. (Schwartz 1986, 362)

It is clear here that correlative cosmology carries strong political implications. There is a political theology behind correlative cosmology. (Schwartz 1986, 362-3) Nonetheless, if the situation of mutual conquest or contention continues, that is, wood conquers earth, metal conquers wood and fire conquers metal, then the world would never have real harmony or true peace. This world is perpetuated in mutual contention. Humanity would not attain salvation. Unfortunately, this had been a typical situation in Chinese history where a later dynasty had to overthrow previous dynasty to begin a new era. Although it is called a revolution in name, is a continuation of mutual conquest and hostilities in reality. The era of great peace (大同) would never emerge in human history as mutual conquest rather than reciprocal engenderment dominates political history.

If history repeats itself in this way, then it is imperative for humanity to go beyond the cyclical patterns of history to find salvation. Only mutual engenderment could end this cycle and bring us salvation. For Daesoon Jinrihoe, the inescapable rotation of the age of *sangsaeng* and that of *sanggeuk* in human history would only result in disruptions of humanity. *Sangsaeng* and *sanggeuk* should not take place in rotation. To ensure eternal peace or everlasting harmony, a permanent substitution of *sangsaeng* for *sanggeuk* in human history is extremely important and urgent.

## **Haewon and Asian Thought**

### **A. Ideas of *yuan* (冤) and *yuanjie* (冤結) in indigenous Chinese thought**

In exploring the meaning of *bae won* or *yuan jie* in Chinese, we also have to go back to China to trace its development in East Asia. The meaning of *yuan* or *won* is the crux for us to understand the import of *bae won* or *yuan jie*. However, there are two cultural origins for the idea of *yuan*. One is from indigenous Chinese thought and the other from Chinese popular Buddhist culture. I will first explain traditional Chinese ideas on *yuan* and then tackle problems related to *yuan* in Chinese Buddhism.

On the other hand, it is intellectually rewarding for us to explore related metaphors of *yuan* semantically. At this juncture, it is important for us to grasp contrasting metaphors between *bae won or jie yuan* (解冤 in Chinese) and *yuan jie* (冤結) or *jie yuan* (結冤) first so that the implications of *won or yuan* can be explored. It has to be pointed out that the metaphor of *yuan jie* (冤結) belongs to traditional culture shared by Confucianism and Taoism. The second one, *jie yuan* (結冤) is the indigenization of Mahayana Buddhism in China. I will discuss *yuan jie* (冤結) first for its historical precedence and then *jie yuan* (結冤) in Chinese Buddhism so that fruitful ambiguity of 冤 can be cleared up.

*Yuan jie* (冤結) figures prominently in the early history of Chinese and East Asian literature. (Liu 2016) In fact, *yuan jie* as a very striking metaphor in traditional Chinese culture has undergone many vicissitudes in history. *Yuan* (冤 or 怨) is often compared to twisted knots (結, *jie*). Unless twisted knots are completely untied, *yuan*, or grievance or bitterness will continue to be deep-rooted in one's mind and heart. There will be no outlet for deep resentment if knots remain tightly tangled. Only when knots are fully undone, could one's accumulated resentment be overcome. Grievance is an intense anger filled with sentiments of unjustness and desperation.

*Yuan jie* became an important concept related to community life in one of the early Taoist scriptures, *The Scripture on Great Peace*. (*Tai ping Jing* 《太平經》, hereafter TPJ) which was codified between 2<sup>nd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century CE. (Hendrischke 2006, 31-42) Conditions for personal salvation are elaborated in this important text. Among others, to get rid of resentment in society is considered to be imperative in this scripture. Hendrischke pointed out one of the main concerns of TPJ:

An important element of personal as well as public life is the avoidance of resentment. Individuals must be careful not to become resentful, and men in a leading position must make sure that their subordinates are satisfied. Whatever causes men to bear a grudge must be avoided. . . officials and their apparatus must not cause resentment among the people by disregarding their plight or imprisoning the innocent. The need to avoid resentment also plays a role in the prohibition of infanticide, a cruelty that all women resent and that for this reason alone is bound to create *cosmic upheaval*. The prevention of resentment is also behind a fastidious process of selecting and supervising officials and clerks. Superiors must make sure they assign their subordinates to jobs they are well able to handle, lest they become desperate. (Hendrischke 2006, 53, italics mine)

Here, resentment is a rendering of Chinese *yuan* (怨). It is a strong and adverse sentiment among the ruled if a sense of being wronged by the superior is generated.

To avoid accumulated resentment, the ruler must pay attention to what is needed of his subjects. Basically, it is politically orientated and has much to do with public order and social life. Moreover, it has to be indicated that female infanticide was widely practiced when TPJ was composed, and this apparently caused grave concern because it was an offence against harmony between yin and yang. The author of TPJ warned against this callous practice and contended that the murder of a fetus, a heinous crime against women, would eventually cause *yuanjie-qi* (冤結氣) in the cosmos:

Now if one family kills one female: how many hundreds of thousands of family are there all over the world? Sometimes one family kills dozens of females or a fetus injured before birth. Grief-stricken *qi* rises up to move heaven. How can these acts not be disorderly?<sup>11</sup> (Hendrischke 2006, 75)

It is remarkable here that the *qi* (or 氣, *ch'i*) of *yuanjie* is so prevailing that it could move heaven. It means that accumulated resentful and grievous souls could have cosmic effect. This cosmic repercussion has much to do with correlative cosmology, but it also shows redemptive power of collective suffering. Heaven which is moved by *yuanjie-qi* will surely cause catastrophe on earth. In the footnote to the above passage, Hendrischke pointed out the grave implications of *yuan* in traditional Chinese culture:

*Yuan Jie* (冤結, grief-stricken) seems to occur in the Chu ci... where it describes a woman's undefined sadness. Throughout the text [of TPJ], the character *yuan* (冤, grievance) is also used as in the meaning of *yuan* (怨, resentment). *Yuan Jie* as well as *yuan* (冤 and 怨) often indicates the resentment felt by those who see themselves as maltreated and suffering without cause. This resentment, which reaches beyond death, amount to a major cosmic force because it stimulates heaven to cause disaster.<sup>12</sup> (Hendrischke 2006, 91 n. 45)

Although 冤 and 怨 are often interchangeable in Chinese culture as shown above, it seems that resentment (怨) is caused by grievance (冤) and not vice versa. Grievance comes first and a deep and intense grievance becomes bitter resentment. Seeing from its pictorial ideograph, the word 冤 refers to a rabbit confined in a house without exit. It is because of such wrongful confinement that people are driven crazy. One feels victimized, which fosters a grievance, and a terrible bitterness arises in one's heart. Like entangled knots have to be untied dexterously, deep-rooted resentment has to be untangled pertinently lest it should facilitate more resentment. Eventually, *yuanjie* as a striking and powerful metaphor left an indelible mark in Chinese culture. Liu explained the nuances of *yuanjie* (冤結) lucidly:

This metaphor is derived from the experience of tying knots such as wearing fragrant grasses. Referring by analogy, emotional entanglement accumulated by the wrongful treatments (冤屈, *yuanqu*) is compared to what is suitable to tie but difficult to untangle. It [*yuanjie*] becomes an imaginary cultural symbol. (Liu 2016, 1)

Indeed, images of tangled and untied are important for us to understand significant weight of *yuan* carried in traditional Chinese culture. These knots are easy to tie but difficult to untie. In the TPJ, it is because of the *qi* of *yuanjie* gets tangled that victims are eventually noticed from on high. The collective *yuanjie* of wronged innocents should be taken seriously and dealt with properly by a ruler. It is also important for the general public to distinguish rumor from the truth so that truth is not veiled and knots of resentment are not accrued:

Should a large number of words from various traditions support each other, they would become irrefutable and be considered standard language. This goes back to one single person having missed the truth in what he said. But in turn this made all these men miss the truth, which upset the validity of the correct texts revealed by heaven. This would be the reason why customs would be altered and habits changed. Although the world might see all this as a great ill, they would be unable to bring it to a halt. It would be worse over because distress would be transmitted from one generation to the next. [However], these later generations would not know that the point from which it came lay in distance. Instead they would hold contemporaries responsible, therefore intensifying the resentment between them. This in turn would not allow the knots which *qi* gotten tangled to be untied but would make them daily more resistant.<sup>13</sup> (Hendrichske 2006, 143-144)

The intensification of resentment among the suffering people would make tangled *qi* even more tied. “Distress transmitted from one generation to the next” is translation of the term “*cheng fu zhi e*” (承甫之厄). *Cheng fu* is an important concept in TPJ. Semantically, *cheng* (承) means reception and *fu* (甫) transmission of “[evil].” (Hendrichske 2006, 141). As shown from the above passage, there is an accumulation of resentment from past generations to later generations if resentment is not untied. What is received will be transmitted if the knots are not untangled. Obviously, this generational reception and transmission of resentment is different from the Buddhist idea of karmic retribution. Karmic retribution is a religio-ethical persuasion in which the present state of an individual is the result (karmic effect) of his or her past deeds. Here, it is the whole society that bears the responsibility. In contrast, it is the principle of retributive justice that accounts for this and next life of a person in Buddhism.<sup>14</sup>

Also, the discourse that *qi* got tangled in knots when resentment is intensified is worth noting. Resentment among ordinary people obstructs the free flow of universal *qi*. Dissonance of *qi* will cause cosmic disorder. This surely explains a correlative relation between humanity, society and the cosmos connected by the omnipresence of *qi*. The existence of *qi* is vital for us to understand the knots of resentment:

Should primordial *qi* not cooperate, the spiritlike man without bodily form will not arrive, and if heaven's *qi* does not do so, the man of great spirit will not come. Problems with earth's *qi* will prevent the perfected from coming. Disharmony of four seasons will prevent the arrival of the transcendent. Should the five phases lack harmony, the man of great *dao* will not step forward. If Yin and Yang are not in cooperation, wise men will not appear. Should what the texts say not be true, officials of great worth will not come. Should they not be able to harvest the ten thousand crops, the common people will be in disorder, there will be few goods and commodities, and serfs will run away. Men will ignore their responsibility in all their activities. This is precisely the damage [that results from a disharmony of *qi*]. Should you wish to deliver heaven from disorderly *qi* you have to work hard unremittingly at creating balance.<sup>15</sup> (Hendrichske 2006, 208-209)

Ultimately, it is *qi* which provokes *yuanjie* to its cosmic consequences. It will bring disorder not only in the realm of nature but also to that of humanity. An impending disaster seems inevitable. Correlative cosmology is the basis of the discourse. Apparently, returning to balance or harmony is the only way to save the cosmos from chaos.

## **B. Buddhist contribution to the understanding of *yuan* and *jie yuan* (結冤) as universal karmic connection**

On the other hand, the concept of *jie yuan* (結冤 or 結怨) has much to do with Buddhism in East Asia. Through the dissemination of Buddhism in East Asia, Indian thought has immeasurably enriched Chinese and Korean understandings of the spiritual realm. When Buddhism came to East Asia around the Christian era, it also brought new religio-ethical orientations to this area. Among others, the introduction of thoughts related to karma is worth noting. Karma as a novel idea provides a powerful impetus for a more sophisticated explanation of human conduct. Human conduct is seen not merely from a moralistic perspective. A new religio-ethical vision of humanity has opened up. The significance of human conduct acquired a broad dimension through the propagation of Buddhism in East Asia.

One of imported ideals related to karma is a novel sense of 冤 or 怨. Different from the indigenous East Asian mode of thought, the Buddhist concepts of 冤 or 怨 (*śatru* in Sanskrit or *sattu* in Pāli) represent a religio-ethical imaginary of karmic retribution and bondage rather than tangled knots because of social and political injustice. It is not deep anger because of wrongful treatment. Neither is it related to political or social injustice in its nature. Rather, it is animosity or enmity because of intricate karmic connection. Here, ideas of an inexorable karmic bond to lend themselves to the Chinese religious spirit. The word 冤 or 怨 in Chinese acquired a new sense of identity.

The word *śatru* or *sattu* subtly expresses the rich meaning of the antagonistic relationship: a destroyer, an enemy, foe, rival, a hostile king or a neighboring king as a natural enemy and so on. In Buddhism, it also characterizes a collective yet adverse human relationship from time immemorial because of predestined conflicts. Thus, father and son could become adverse to one another because of estrangement. Princes would commit regicide to usurp the throne. Neighboring countries could become rivals for the sake of conquest. Owing to quarrels, friends could become strangers or even foes. Indeed, human relationships could easily become antagonistic due to some ensnared karmic bonds.

To be sure, the ideal of *sattu* is powerfully embodied in King Ajātasattu of Magadha (reigned c. 493- 461 BCE) who committed patricide for the consolidation of his throne in ancient India.<sup>16</sup> As an ambitious and merciless king, Ajātasattu (or in Sanskrit, Ajātaśatru)<sup>17</sup> is profoundly connected with *sattu*. In fact, Ajātasattu is not only a deadly foe of his father, but also of neighboring kings because of his outright ambition and aggression. He not only committed the heinous crime of patricide, but also fought fiercely with other neighboring kingdoms for political hegemony. He is the enemy of his own kinsmen as well as of many other kings. How do we make sense of this cold-blooded, overbearing political personality?

It appears that the compound “ajātasattu” is likely to mean “one whose adversary is present before his birth.” Incidentally, the commentary of the *Dīgha Nikāya* refers to Ajātasattu’s destiny as “the enemy of his father even before he was born.”<sup>18</sup> If this is the intention of the designation for an unprecedentedly dominant and pitiless king in an age of great political transformation, it powerfully articulates the destiny of a political hero: he has to wipe out any enemies on his way to becoming universal monarch. At this particular historical epoch in ancient India, a king of the Ajātasattu type was at war with adjoining kings all the time. A potential universal monarch was at enmity with all internal and external rivalries and his father-the reigning king-is the first archrival.

In the Sāmmññaphala Sutta, King Ajātasattu who committed patricide in due course paid the Buddha a visit to overcome his compunction and bewilderment. He confessed before the Buddha what he did to his father and sought forgiveness for his unpardonable crime. The Buddha did not condone his patricide and declared before

the Saṃgha: “This king, monks, is uprooted; this king, monks, is destroyed.”<sup>19</sup>

King Ajātasattu is translated semantically in Chinese as 「未生冤王」 or 「未生怨王」. 「冤」 and 「怨」 here are substitutable, indicating the Chinese understanding of this compound as an expression of an inexorable karmic bond. Here, its meaning is better understood as animosity or enmity rather than grievance or resentment in the pre-Buddhist Chinese context. Translators of Buddhist Sūtras used existing Chinese vocabulary to give it new religio-ethical connotations. Consequently, *sattu* as embodied in King Ajātasattu eventually leads to the assimilation of animosity or enmity as the meaning of 「冤」 and 「怨」 into Chinese religious culture through the translation of Buddhist texts and the propagation of Buddhism in East Asia. The type of political personality represented by King Ajātasattu acquires a new sense of *sattu* in China as well as other East Asian countries.<sup>20</sup>

This new idea of 冤 or 未生冤 not only enriches the Chinese understanding of the human existential situation, but also adds a new dimension to the omnipresence of enmity or animosity in a cosmic sense. This kind of predetermined karmic bond transformed Chinese religious culture when Mahayana Buddhism reached China. The Chinese understanding of this 冤 also introduced a new religio-ethical perspective of humanity in Chinese Buddhism. In the long run, it leads to a new understanding of human karmic adversary as “incurring enmity” (結冤 or 結怨). As seen from King Ajātasattu, karmic bondage is deeply embedded in human relationships, especially among close relatives. Eventually, ideas of “adverse relatives and karmic creditors” (冤親債主)<sup>21</sup> gradually developed in Chinese popular Buddhism.

In a fundamental sense, this new religious climate in China may have something to do with ideas of affection (in Pāli: *sineba*, *sneba*) in Buddhism. Affection, especially love between family members, creates attachment (*saṅga*). However, attachment leads to greed (*rāgā*), anger (*dosa*), and delusion (*moha*). A mendicant should abandon affection - as a tangible token of attachment -, so that he can walk proudly on the path to purification. It is said in the *Dhammapada*:

Cut off one’s affection like a person plucks an autumn lotus with one’s hand.<sup>22</sup>

The lotus withered away in autumn. Its beauty is decayed and should be discarded for lacking of any ornamental value. Likewise, the bond of intimate relationship should be discarded so that the spirit of freedom from bondage can be obtained. In fact, affection is a fault (*sinaba-dosa*) in itself. It is also said in the *Suttanipāta*:

Without any dependence, having cut off the fault of affection, one should wander alone (like a rhinoceros).<sup>23</sup>

The above verses show the importance of discarding affection for a world renouncer. However, for ordinary people, affection generates mutual dependence. It is because of intimacy and mutual dependence between family members and close friends that causes a bond of affection. Conversely, bonds of affection easily harbor bitterness and hatred among family members because of jealousy, covetousness, anger and other vices. They quarrel with one other and bear a grudge against their loved ones. They become enemies in the end.

This new sense of 冤 and its related ideas eventually lead to the codification of Buddhist ritual texts related to penance in China. The most famous one is *Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang* (《梁皇寶懺》). This is a penance ritual text attributed to Emperor Wu of Liang (464-549 AD) for his wife who was allegedly being reborn as a python and suffered constant pain. It's said that her bad karmic retribution has much to do with her jealous and cruel treatment of other members of the harem when she was alive. The emperor asked eminent monks of his court to help him out. Eventually, this penance ritual text was composed and a ritual of confession was performed for his dead wife. (Yü 2001, 208) It has become a popular text chanted for the dead in Chinese Buddhism since the Sung Dynasty (960-1279 AD). The text itself is recited and related rituals are performed in many temples even nowadays in Taiwan, usually during the Tomb Sweeping Day or the Ghost Festival. Together with *Shuilu Fabui* (水陸法會, ritual for the deliverance of creatures of water and land),<sup>24</sup> these two rites of penance became most important rituals for the deliverance of the dead in China:

These are two of the most popular Buddhist mortuary rituals and they are still widely performed today. Because the rituals consist of chanting sutras (*ching*) and performing penances (*ch'an*), they are called *ching-ch'an* for short. According to Buddhism, due to the evil karma people commit while alive, they become hungry ghosts after death. As such, they perpetually suffer from hunger and thirst. Only food and drink offered by monks at properly performed rituals can relieve their suffering. Although no one wants to believe that his dead family members have become hungry ghost, there is always a possibility that this might be the case. And even if it is not so, the sponsoring of such rites will unfailingly generate a great deal of merit, which can be transferred to the dead relatives to help them receiving a good rebirth. (Yü 2001, 205)

In fact, there is another important goal for the performance of mortuary ritual: to resolve enmity incurred among all sentient beings. All sentient beings in the universe



are interconnected through karmic bond of rebirth and easily become “adverse relatives and karmic creditors” in the cosmic process of interconnection. Through penance rituals, all karmic debts could be discharged and deep-seated animosity would be resolved. The religio-ethical concern of “untangling animosity and resolving knots” (解冤釋結) for all adverse relatives and karmic creditors is the motive for the performance of mortuary ritual. It is said in the chapter “untangling animosity and resolving knots” of *Repentance Ritual of the Emperor Liang*:

Six kinds of close relative and all family dependents are roots of one’s animosity in three generations. All enmities begin with relatives. Animosity would not come up if one has no relatives. Being separated from relatives is deprived of animosity. Why so? If two relatives stay far away from each another, animosity would not arise between them. It is because people are close to each other that animosity takes place.<sup>25</sup>

This new concept of “adverse relatives” runs against Confucian ideals of family values at first glance. In Confucianism, the family is an ideal locus to cultivate humanity (仁, *jen*). Harmonious relationships between family members is confidently expected and filial piety is highly praised. It seems that ideas of adverse relatives are in conflict with traditional Confucian values. Since these mortuary rituals, even if they are inspired by Buddhism from India, are aiming at releasing departed close ones from suffering, the ideal of filial piety is still preserved. Even more, it is for the benefit of all sentient beings in the postmortem world. In the end, to release all sentient beings from the abyss of animosity incurred in the past and the present is what is intended to occur through the rituals. This is in accordance with the aspiration of the bodhisattvas in Mahayana Buddhism: for the deliverance of all sentient beings from the suffering of *samsāra*.

## Concluding Remarks

*Haewon-sangsaeng* is arguably the most important and noble ideal in Daesoon Jinrihoe. It is a powerful religio-ethical metaphor as can be seen from the above investigation. Clearly, this ideal has its long intellectual history in East and South Asia. It is a fully embodied religio-ethical ideal with profound concern for the spiritual welfare of humanity. In its essence, *Haewon-sangsaeng* can be divided into two parts: *haewon* and *sangsaeng*. *Haewon* conveys an important message of reconciliation for the future of humanity. *Sangsaeng* expresses an earnest hope for the sustainability and beneficence of humanity. It is through the practice of *haewon* that lofty ideals of *sangsaeng* can be realized. To live together harmoniously with others without grievance or enmity in this world is the noble ideal of *haewon-sangsaeng*.

In pre-Buddhist East Asia, *baewon-sangsaeng* has much to do with correlative cosmology and political life related to public and social welfare. It's more socio-politically orientated, though ethical and apocalyptic aspects also are implied. Buddhism gives *yuan* a new perspective. Karmic animosity and enmity add to the original meaning of grievance and resentment. *Yuan jie* (冤結) as knots of grievance, gives way to *jie yuan* (結冤), incurring enmity because of karmic connection.

In Chinese popular Buddhism, repentance rituals are performed to resolve animosity accumulated in many previous lives among sentient beings. As mortuary rites, these repentance rituals have been widespread since the medieval period in China. However, for Daesoon Jinrihoe, *baewon-sangsaeng* is probably not to be taken merely as a ritual practice or curative value in our lives. Rather, it should be taken as an ideal of permanent value, a moral practice to resolve enmity and grievances which hopefully will bring perpetual peace and harmony to this world.

From a self-cultivation viewpoint, everyone has to resolve his or her grievances or animosity to reconcile with others for mutual beneficence. Therefore, a sense of human fellowship has to be nurtured so that the spirit of forgiveness and amity can prevail in this world. *Haewon-sangsaeng* is the first step for us to develop a meaningful and enduring relationship with others. As the world now is torn apart by various conflicts, *baewon-sangsaeng* is the moral imperative most needed in the present situation.

## Conflict of Interest

Huang Pochi has been on the Editorial Board of *JDTREA* since July 2021 but had no role in the decision to publish this article. No potential conflict of interest relevant to this article was reported.

## Notes

\*The expression “religio-ethical” designates one of the prominent elements on the tenets of Daesoon Jinrihoe, especially the ideal of *haewon-sangsaeng*, which combines religious persuasion with ethical practices. Moral observances are predicated upon religious commandment and derive their worth from it. This does not necessarily imply that ethics is the lesser, but it is an element of religious value system. While religious deliverance provides the ultimate point of reference for what a meaningful existence should be, it is ethical comportment which commends people in their practices. Whereas religion provides its adherent with a *Weltanschauung*, moral injunction renders life in this world consequential. Hence, ethics and religion are integrated and must be treated as a whole.

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed explanation of correlative cosmology, see Needham (1956, 279-303); and Graham (1989, 313-358).

<sup>2</sup> “The *yin-yang* dualism ... is based, not upon mutual opposition, but upon natural harmony. The feminine *yin* and masculine *yang* are equally essential if there is to exist a universe. Each is complementary to the other, and neither is necessarily superior or inferior from a moral point of view.” (Bodde 1981, 135) Descombes’ ideas of structural holism are also worth quoting here: “[It] would be difficult to speak about holistic properties without saying that they are a class of relational properties: they are relations that have as their distinctive trait to depend on one another, to from a *structure*.” (Descombes 2014, 116)

<sup>3</sup> *Sheng* as the dominant metaphor in early Chinese conscious life may have something to do with ancestor worship. Also, ideas of *sheng* may contribute to the rise of correlative cosmology in the Spring and Autumn Period (770-221 BCE). Schwartz posed the following absorbing questions which are worth pondering: ‘Does the fact that in later Chinese high-cultural accounts of the origins of mankind or cosmos, the dominant metaphor is that of procreation or “giving birth” (*sheng*), rather than that of fashioning or creating, have anything to do with the centrality of ancestor worship with its dominance of the biological metaphor? Does this in turn have something to do with the predominance of what some have called “monistic” and “organismic” orientations of later high-cultural thought?’ (Schwartz, 1985, 26)

<sup>4</sup> 「道生一，一生二，二生三，三生萬物。萬物負陰而抱陽，沖氣以為和。」

<sup>5</sup> 「生生之謂易。」

<sup>6</sup> 「二氣交感，化生萬物，萬物生生而變化無窮焉。」

<sup>7</sup> 「相生者乃：金生水，水生木，木生火，火生土，土再生金。相剋者乃：金剋木，木剋土，土剋水，水剋火，火剋金。」 For a detailed account of correlation of nature forces, see Needham (1956, 253-261). As pointed out by Schwartz, the idea of five elements can be traced back to that of six storehouses in early Confucian classics like the *Book of Documents* (Shangshu 《尚書》). (Schwartz 1985, 358) It is said in this classic: “The virtue (of the ruler) is seen in (his) good government, and that government in the nourishing of the people. There are water, fire, metal, wood, the earth, and grain, -these must be duly regulated.” (Legge 1966, 47)

<sup>8</sup> 「唯先天相剋支配人間，世間累積冤恨，天地人三界相隔絕，世間災禍橫生之故也。」

<sup>9</sup> Or “resolution of grievances for the mutual beneficence of all life” as officially translated by Daesoon Jinrihoe, see DAOS (2016, 10: 59) and so on.

<sup>10</sup> 上帝對金亨烈道：「在先天，人與世間萬物皆為相剋之所支配，世間怨恨日積月累，錯綜複雜地充斥於三界之中。天地失其長道，各種災禍叢生，世間暗無天日。因此吾欲整理天地度數，調化神明，以解萬古怨恨，以相生之道建後天仙境，濟度世間蒼生。」說完，隨即行了冥府公事的一部分。

<sup>11</sup> 「今天下一家殺一女，天下幾億家哉？或有一家乃殺十數女者，或有姪之未生出，反就傷之者，其氣冤結上動天，奈何無道理乎？」(Wang 1960 vol. 1, 36)

- 12 In the *Chu ci* (or *Cb'u tz'u*: 《楚辭》), the stanzas referring to *yuan jie* (冤結) are in the *Bei hui feng of chapter Jiu Zhang* (Grieving at the Eddying Wind of the Nine Pieces, 〈九章·悲回風〉):  
Grieving at the eddying wind that shakes the orchid blossoms, My heart sorely troubled, and within me sorrows. (悲回風之搖蕙兮，心冤結而內傷。(Hawkes 1985, 180)  
Hawkes translated Yuan Jie as “heart sorely troubled.” The phrase “heart sorely troubled” actually expresses a feeling of bitterness by a court functionary (probably not suggested by Hendrischke above). He thought his unswerving loyalty to the king was politically unjustly treated by him because the king listened to a calumny of a wicked official. The king no longer trusted him. He suffered a grievance of injustice.
- 13 「又言者大眾，多傳相徵，不可反也，因以為常說。此本由一人失說實，迺反都使凡人失說實核，以亂天文，因而移風易俗，天下以為病，而不能相禁止，其後者劇，此即承負之厄也，非後人之過明矣。後世不知其所由來者遠，反以責時人，故重相冤也：復為結氣不除，日益劇甚。」(Wang 1960 vol. 1, 58)
- 14 Maeda considered that the idea of *cheng fu* might have Buddhist influence such as karmic retribution. (Maeda 2006) For this, Hendrischke said: “The origin of *cheng fu* is not so much individual guilt as society’s general lack of concerns for heaven’s rules (TPJ 50.70) and *dao*’s intentions (TPJ 58.96), that is, the departure of humankind from the simple and primitive life of early antiquity. The crimes committed must be imaged as the faults mentioned throughout the TPJ: for example, the killings of females, chastity, the digging of wells, and the concern for culture and ornament.” (Hendrischke 2006, 147) The Confucian moral concerns for the welfare of the community rather than that of individual are clearly visible in *cheng fu*. In fact, the Buddhist idea of karmic retribution brings new meaning to 冤 in China, as I should show later in this paper.
- 15 「元氣不和，無形神人不來至；天氣不和，大神人不來至；地氣不和，真人不來至；四時不和，仙人不來至；五行不和，大道人不來至；陰陽不和，聖人不來至；文字言不真，大賢人不來至；萬物不和得，凡民亂，財貨少，奴婢逃亡，凡事失其職，此正其害也。今真人既欲救天亂氣，宜努力平之，勿懈怠，慎之。」(Wang 1960 vol. 1, 90).
- 16 For an early account of Ajātasattu related his patricide, see the Sāmmānāphala Sutta of the *Dīgha Nikāya* and *Vinayaṭīkā* 2, 191-193.
- 17 Ajātasattu rather than Ajātasātru is used here as Pāli text represents the early narrative of this king.
- 18 Ajāto yeva rañño sattu bhavissatīti. Sumaṅgala-Vilāsini, vol. 1: 133.
- 19 Khatāyaṃ bhikkhave rājā, upahatāyaṃ bhikkhave rājā. Dīgha Nikāya, 1:86. In the Chinese Dirghāgama we read: 「此阿闍世王過罪損減，已拔重咎。」 (“This King Ajātasattu’s crime is reduced, [his] weighty crime is uprooted. “Taishō shinshū daizōkyō 1, 109b). The narrative of Ajātasatta also found in Jainism. (Wu 2014; Wu 2019).
- 20 The narrative of Ajātasattu’s patricide underwent many vicissitudes in Buddhism, and there are many versions of this incident. The crux is whether Ajātasattu’s contrition is pardoned by the Buddha, and he obtains salvation. As a whole, the later narrative tends to see Ajātasattu’s patricide as pardonable from the viewpoint of karmic retribution. For the history of the Ajātasattu narrative through translation in East Asia see Radich (2011).
- 21 The concept of 冤親債主 is also found in religious Daoism, on which I am unable to elaborate here. However, I wonder if Buddhism might have contributed to the formation of Daoist ideas and rituals of 冤親債主.
- 22 Uccinda sineham attano kumudaṃ sārādikam va pāṇinā. (Dhammapada. Maggavaggo13, a-b)
- 23 Anissito chetvā sinehadosaṃ eko care [khaggavisāṇakappo] (Suttanipāta. vs.. 66 cd)
- 24 Stevenson (2001).
- 25 「又復六親，一切眷屬，皆是我等三世怨根。一切怨對，皆從親起。若無有親，亦無有怨。若能離親，即是離怨，何以故爾？若各異處，遠隔他鄉，如是二人，終不得起怨恨之心。得起怨恨，皆由親近。」(Liangwudi 2017, 343)

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