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Salvation through History: On the Relationship between An Kyōngjōn's Millenarian Doctrine and Pseudohistory

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ABSTRACT

In recent years, South Korean pseudohistorians, who accuse the academic establishment of promoting “colonial-era historiography,” have achieved political influence impacting professional research on early Korea. Their alternative narrative imagines ancient Korea as an expansive continental empire giving rise to northeast Asian civilization. Archetypal to this conceptualization is the apocryphal history *Hwandan kogi* 桓檀古記 (1979). Placed in the history sections of bookstores, the most accessible edition today is that translated by An Kyōngjōn, second-generation patriarch of the syncretic new religion of Chūngsando. An's *Hwandan kogi* contains an extensive introduction both synthesizing the full canon of Korean pseudohistory, and incorporating his own millenarian doctrine drawn from Sino-Korean esotericism; An further supplements both these aspects with corresponding Western pseudoscience pertaining to lost civilizations and imminent apocalypse. Situating An's doctrine in diachronic contexts of popular Korean history and new religion, this paper seeks to illuminate one of the lesser known forces currently abetting Korean pseudohistory.

Keywords: An Kyōngjōn, Chūngsando, *Hwandan kogi*, *kaebyōk*, Korea, millenarianism, new religion, pseudoarchaeology, pseudohistory, Sangsaeng.

In South Korea between 2013 and 2015 a series of cross-party National Assembly special committee hearings was held targeting its own government-funded Northeast Asian History Foundation, which had been established in 2006 in the context of ongoing history and territorial disputes with China and Japan. The effect of these sessions was to trigger the termination of funding for two of the foundation's flagship projects: the Early Korea Project (2006–2017) based at Harvard University, and a digital historical atlas project (2008–2015) developed by South Korean scholars (Yi Munyōng 2018, 156–167). The line of questioning during these hearings utilized a well-established polemic that defames the domestic academic establishment as a “pro-Japanese, treasonous cartel” who, according to this mischaracterization, continue to promote colonial-era Japanese historiography that specifically seeks to diminish ancient Korea's supposed grandeur. The most efficacious iterations of this polemic have been authored by Yi Tōgil (b. 1961), a prolific popularizer of pseudohistory (Yi 2014; 2015).¹ Yi charges that establishment scholars seek to hide the truth of early Korea having been both an ancient

continental empire and the origin of northern East Asian civilization.

Aside from Yi's books, the most accessible rendition of this ancient empire narrative is found in *Hwandan kogi* (桓檀古記, "Old records of Hwan and Tan [states]"), an apocryphal history proven forged during the 1970s which is nevertheless found in all major South Korean bookstores, usually in, or immediately adjacent to the early history sections. Indicative of its deep influence, *Hwandan kogi* was quoted in a 2013 Liberation Day address by then president Park Geun Hye. At the time, Park's administration was moving to reintroduce single government-mandated history textbooks for use in schools; this policy was principally pursued in order to control representations of South Korea's earlier decades of autocratic rule, but was not adverse to exaggerations of early history.² While debate over Korea's recent past is politically polarizing between right- and left-leaning camps, representation of a grand early history enjoys bipartisan support. Aggrandizement of the past is seen to offset the perceived shame of twentieth-century colonization. Believers in such a notion of ancient Korean empire are referred to by their detractors in Korean as *hwanppa*, a derogatory term that might translate as "Hwandan kogi maniac."

Originally authored in Literary Sinitic (Literary Chinese), the most prominent edition of *Hwandan kogi* currently available is a relatively recent version translated into Korean with annotations and an extensive introduction by An Kyōngjōn 安耕田 (An 2012).³ If one searches for "Hwandan kogi" in Korean on YouTube, high in the results are a series of hour-long videos titled *Hwandan kogi Book Concert*, uploaded by media channel STB, in Korean known as Sangsaeng broadcasting.⁴ The Book Concerts are recordings of An Kyōngjōn lecturing on *Hwandan kogi*. An delivers his exegeses to a large concert hall sitting on a high dais decorated with flowers. The same YouTube channel, "Hwandan kogi Book Concert STB," not uncoincidentally, also has videos of Yi Tōgil lecturing on the conspiracy polemic of colonial historiography.

If one searches on YouTube for the name of An Kyōngjōn alone, then in addition to the *Hwandan kogi* Book Concerts, videos of him lecturing on other topics can be found across at least three further STB channels, and we discover him to be a charismatic leader preaching a millenarian message of political and climatic upheavals, termed *kaebyōk* (開闢, "the dawn of civilization"), giving way to a future golden age of global unification geographically centered on Korea. This golden age is framed as a cosmic season of autumn. The content of An's Autumn

¹ For a detailed definition of Korean pseudohistory, see Logie 2019.

² See *Midiō onūl* 미디어오늘, "환단고기 인용했던 박 대통령, 고대사 건드리는 이유는" November 3, 2015, <http://m.mediatoday.co.kr/?mod=news&act=articleView&idno=125897#Redyho> (accessed October 10, 2018). On the textbook policy and conservative revisionism, see Doucette and Koo 2016, 213.

³ Real name An Chunggōn 安重建 (b. 1954). *Namuwiki*'i 나무위키 "증산도" <https://namu.wiki/w/증산도> footnote 4 (accessed October 10, 2018).

⁴ *Hwandan kogi puk k'onsōt'ū* STB 환단고기북콘서트STB, 2016 *Hwandan kogi puk k'onsōt'ū yōnsedae p'yōn il pu* 환단고기 북 콘서트 연세대 편 1부 단군조선은 삼한三韓이다 (online video), October 11, 2017, <https://youtu.be/gvoU5SwI-IQ> (accessed November 11, 2018).

Kaebŏk broadly corresponds to the doctrine of the messianic new Korean religion, Chŭngsando (甌山道, “Way of Chŭngsan”), that was established by An’s own father in 1974. According to An junior, knowledge to survive the apocalyptic period of *kaebŏk* is encoded in the religio-philosophy of ancient Korean civilization. He names this knowledge Sin’gyo (神敎, “divine teaching”), for which, he asserts the key source to be *Hwandan kogi*.

As demonstrated through the special committee hearings, the continued propagation of twentieth-century Korean pseudohistory through popular publishing in the twenty-first century, by agents such as Yi Tŏgil and An Kyŏngjŏn, feeds a reservoir of Bourdieusian cultural capital that can be tapped for political gain. Despite its current success as a highly visible new religion in South Korea, Chŭngsando has yet to receive attention from either Korean or foreign scholars.⁵ In English-language literature the same could also be said of contemporary Korean pseudohistory. Taking these factors into account and owing to the wide availability of An’s *Hwandan kogi* it is critically important to begin examining the phenomenon of its incorporation within Chŭngsando doctrine and propagation tactics.

Current Chŭngsando Doctrine and Practice

As a religion, Chŭngsando reveres a cosmic being referred to as Sangje-nim. The term Sangje (上帝, “high emperor”) is attested from the earliest Chinese classics, starting with *Shangshu* (尚書, *Book of Documents*), and was famously equated to the Christian god by Matteo Ricci (1552–1610); *-nim* is a vernacular Korean honorific suffix, and thus starting from the name we see Chŭngsando’s synthesizing nature. According to Chŭngsando doctrine, Sangje-nim corresponds to the gods of other religious systems, including the same high emperor of Confucianism, the Maitreya Buddha, the Jade Emperor of Taoism, and the Christian god referred to in Korean by Protestants as Hana-nim. Chŭngsando further venerates a divine trinity, *samsin* 三神, comprising gods of creation, cultivation, and governance. These reside in heaven but correspond to various triads including: heaven, earth, and humans; father, teacher, and ruler; Brahma, Shiva, and Vishnu; Hwanin, Hwanung, and Tan’gun (桓因·桓雄·檀君) of the Old Chosŏn foundation myth; and the historical Samhan (三韓, “Three Han”) polities of Mahan, Pyŏnhan, and Chinhan (馬·弁·辰韓) (An 2015a, 122; An 2014b, 193, 202). The triad further corresponds to three texts which are separate but complementary to *Hwandan kogi*, said to transmit the teaching of Sin’gyo from ancient times: *Ch’ŏnbu kyŏng* (天符經, “Classic of the celestial talisman”), *Samilsin ko* (三一神誥, “Three-one god proclamation”), and *Ch’amjŏn’gye kyŏng* (參侏戒經, “Classic of transcendent’s precepts”) (An 2014b: 197).

Chŭngsando followers are taught that Sangje-nim descended to earth, being born as Kang Chŭngsan 姜甌山 (1871–1907), in order to bring the message of *kaebŏk* to the Korean people and teach them the method by which to survive the transition and realize the future earthly paradise of cosmic autumn. They learn

⁵ One early treatment of significance is Walraven (2002), which highlights Chŭngsando’s initial incorporation of ancient history, while briefer treatments are found in Baker (2008, 86) and Flaherty (2011, 33), but these all predate the publication of An’s *Hwandan kogi*.

that both the *kaebyök* apocalypse and Sangje-nim's advent were earlier predicted in *Chöngyök* (正易 "Corrected [Book of] Changes"), authored by Ilbu Kim Hang 一夫金恒 (1826–1898), and in the teachings of the Tonghak religion founded by Suun Ch'oe Cheu 水雲 崔濟愚 (1824–1864; An 2014a: 280, 287). On Chüngsan's death the religion was continued by his widow Ko Subu 高首婦 who is also venerated as cosmic Great Mother (太母, Taemo). The teachings of Chüngsan were initially suppressed by the Japanese, but Ko Subu prophesied a second coming of Sangje-nim (Chüngsan 2003, Chapter 11, Verse 362). This, they cautiously intimate, occurred with the birth of An Kyöngjön's father and founder of Chüngsando, An Unsan 安雲山 (birth name An Sech'an 安世燦, 1922–2012).⁶

The aim of Chüngsando believers is to prepare for and personally survive the period of *kaebyök*, thus ensuring the survival of humanity in the process. Believed to be already underway, *kaebyök* involves geopolitical wars and climate change, the latter causing the submersion of the Japanese archipelago. The golden age will commence with the unification of the Korean peninsula, and thereafter witness global harmony led by Korea. Thus the doctrine is framed within topical geopolitical concerns of Korea's current predicament. Daily practice of Chüngsando, however, focuses on personal well-being and comprises two ascetic elements: the first involves group chanting of prayer texts, chief among them the *Taeülchu* 太乙呪. The second is a broader notion, termed *togong* 道功, that variously refers to bodily comport during prayer recitation, a form of "dynamic meditation" involving rhythmic swaying or bobbing, and general behaviour in daily life. These are performed in front of recently designed portraits of Kang Chüngsan and Ko Subu. In larger venues they are joined by Tan'gun and a photograph of An Unsan. Through correct recitation of *Taeülchu* and sincere *togong*, practitioners are said to be able to channel the lifeforce of the universe, enabling them to survive the *kaebyök* transition (An 2014b, 298).

Twentieth-Century History and the Content of Chüngsando

Chüngsando takes its name from the early twentieth-century millenarian movement of Chüngsan'gyo (Teaching of Chüngsan) established by followers of esoteric leader Chüngsan Kang Ilsun 甌山 姜一淳 (1871–1907). Rather than a single organization, Chüngsan'gyo is essentially a label for a plethora of variously named sects established by Chüngsan's immediate followers, including his widow Ko P'allye 高判禮 (1880–1935, Ko P'an-rye) and daughter Kang Sunim (Chöng 2001, 199–202). One of the main sects to emerge was that of Poch'ön'gyo (普天教, "Teaching of universal heaven"), established in 1919 by Ch'a Kyöngsök 車京石 (1880–1936).⁷ The first text to record Chüngsan's life and teachings was *Chüngsan ch'önsa kongsa ki* (甌山天師公事記 "Official record of celestial teacher Chüngsan"), completed by Poch'ön'gyo member Yi Sangho 李祥昊 (1888–1966) in 1926; Yi further compiled

⁶ The Ko Subu prophecy is specific to Chüngsando doctrine. The claim of An Unsan as the second messiah, or *chinin* (真人, "True Man," Jorgensen 2018, 25) is made only rarely and is absent from the main texts introduced below. One rare example where it is explicit is the digest edition of *Kaebiyök*, An 2015a, 239.

⁷ On Poch'ön'gyo, see Jorgensen 2016.

Taesun chŏn'gyŏng (大巡典經, “Classic of the Great Peregrination”), published in 1929, which thereafter has remained the primary scripture (Yang 2006, 282, 294; Yi 1926; 1929).⁸

Poch'ŏn-gyo and other Chŭngsan'gyo groups were one of at least three distinct new religions that emerged from the 1910s onwards in response to the Japanese takeover of Korea, the other two being Taejonggyo (大崇敬, “Teaching of the Great Deity”) and Wŏnbulgyo (圓佛敎, “Won Buddhism”). This generation of new religions is, in turn, seen as the successors to the mid-nineteenth-century popular religious movement of Tonghak (東學, “Eastern Learning”) established by Suun Ch'oe Cheu (Kallander 2013). The direct successor to Tonghak, meanwhile, was Ch'ŏndogyo (天道敎, “Teaching of the Heavenly Way,” established 1905). Starting from Tonghak, all of these new religions were syncretic, synthesizing the full spectrum of Korean religious and moral traditions—Confucian, Buddhist, Taoist, and nativist—with the monotheism of Christianity (Baker 2002). Parallel and complementary to Tonghak was a lineage of prognostic enquiry centered on Kim Ilbu's aforementioned *Chŏngyŏk*; this has been termed Namhak 南學 (“Southern Learning”).⁹

Following the Japanese annexation, the second generation of new religions has also been read as a response to the imposition of the Japanese state cult of Shintō (Jorgensen 2004, 336). They were further influenced by notions of pan-Asianism that the Japanese themselves used to justify their aggressive overseas expansion. Simultaneously, they may be located in the larger East Asian context of “redemptive societies” that emerged from parallel circumstances of Western religious and imperial penetration (Duara 2003, 103). In both Korea and China, these societies were popular religions that drew from preestablished traditions of syncretism between Confucianism, Buddhism, and Taoism, termed the Three Teachings (三教, Chow 1994, 21).

One doctrinal schism that arose among the second-generation Korean religions with a concept of divinity was whether their god was to be understood as external or internal to humans themselves. Ch'ŏndo-gyo taught that god was within and the equivalent to being human. Opposing this, one of the leaders, Kim Yŏn'guk 金演局 (d. 1944) in 1924 broke away and established Sangjegyo (上帝敎, “Teaching of the High Emperor”), the doctrine of which maintained god as an external being, a notion also adopted by the messianic Chŭngsan sects (Chŏng 2001, 42; Choi 1967, 74; Kim 2013, 93). Kim notably relocated to Sindonae, establishing a cultic

⁸ I borrow Baker's translation of taesun as “great peregrination(s).” Baker (2008, 119).

⁹ See *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* 한국민족문화대백과사전 “남학 (南學)” <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0012252> (accessed November 10, 2018), and Yi Kango (1992, 146–185). As a term encompassing *Chŏngyŏk*-centered tradition, Namhak is only clearly attested from Yi Nŭnghwa (1959), who records it as having been established by Yi Un'gyu (李雲圭, dates unknown). The 1898 Cheju Uprising is known to have been led by a religious organization named the Namhak Party. Based on fieldwork, Yi Kango reconstructed a Namhak school, with Kim Ilbu having been active in current day Nonsan, South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province, and a southern branch led by Kwanghwa Kim Ch'iin (光華 金致寅) active in Yongdam, North Ch'ŏlla Province and participating in the Tonghak Uprising (Yi Kango 1979, cited in Cho 1986, 214). Cho contends that this Namhak Party, led by Pak Sŏngch'il (房星七), were remnants of the Yongdam school which would provide historical attestation of Namhak (Cho 1986, cited also in Ro 2002, 42).

centre just west of present-day Taejŏn, South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province.

The characteristic distinguishing the original Chŭngsan'gyo doctrine from Tonghak and most of the other derivative religions was its messianic claim. While Tonghak's Ch'oe Cheu and subsequent founders claimed to have received revelations and supernatural powers, according to Poch'ŏn'gyo hagiography, Kang Chŭngsan proclaimed himself to be both Sangje and the Maitreya Buddha. Kang's activities were centered on Yonghwa Village 龍華洞, modern southeastern Kimje municipality of North Ch'ŏlla Province, close to the Maitreya temple of Kŭmsansa 金山寺. The name of Yonghwa references the Dragon Flower Assembly described in Maitreya doctrine, and from Paekche (fourth century–665) down to late Chosŏn, this region had been the heartland of Maitreya Buddhism. Both the millenarian and messianic aspects of Chŭngsan'gyo reflect clear continuity from Maitreya Buddhism as much as they may have been informed by Christianity or other syncretisms.¹⁰ Following Kang's death, Poch'ŏn'gyo founder, Ch'a Kyŏngsŏk, subsequently pronounced himself a new son of heaven (*ch'ŏnja* 天子; Chŏng 2001, 205). Present-day Chŭngsando maintains this messianic aspect, cautiously claiming their immediate founder An Unsan to be a second messiah.

In terms of resistance to or collaboration with Japanese rule, the second-generation religions were spread across a spectrum. While Taejonggyo maintained active resistance and relocated its activities to Manchuria, the trajectory of those remaining on the peninsula followed the whims of the Government-Generals' policies and levels of suspicion. Poch'ŏn'gyo's stance was relatively neutral. According to their teaching, Kang Chŭngsan had regarded the Japanese takeover as temporarily necessary in order to protect the East from the West, essentially the same line promoted by the Japanese authorities and clearly influenced by pan-Asianist ideals (Chŏng 2001, 204). What Poch'ŏn'gyo offered to Koreans was the promise of an imminent golden age centered on the peninsula, and it was apparently able to attract large numbers of followers. However, in 1936 Poch'ŏn'gyo and other Chŭngsan'gyo sects were classified by the Government-General as "pseudoreligions" (*ruiji shūkyō*, 類似宗教) and subject to a dissolution order forcing their activities underground (Chŏng 2001, 207).

After liberation, attempts were made in South Korea to unify the Chŭngsan sects but activities were disrupted by the upheaval of the Korean War and they had to contend with continued stigmatization from the Japanese period, as well as the new influx of American Christianity. Following Park Chung Hee's 1961 coup, Chŭngsan'gyo was, by decree, temporarily grouped into a shortlived affiliation of nativist religions named Tongdogyo (東道教, "Teaching of the Eastern Way") which venerated a trinity comprising Tan'gun, Ch'oe Cheu, and Kang Chŭngsan (Yi and Paek 2015, 271). 1969 saw the establishment of Taesunjillihoe (大巡眞理會, "Truth Assembly of the Great Peregrination") based in the capital region and which remains one of the representative Chŭngsan'gyo organizations, though in recent decades it appears to have been eclipsed by rival Chŭngsando (Jorgensen 2001).

¹⁰ On Maitreya see Kim Pangnyong (2017, 227); Chŏng Sunil (2006, 117); and Lancaster (1988, 146).

Against the context of Park Chung Hee's military nationalism and industrialization, the 1970s saw a resurgence of new religions. Chŭngsan'gyo had originated in the region of North Chŏlla Province, whereas Chŭngsando is based further north in Taejŏn, South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province. This region has its own geomantic traditions associated with Mount Kyeryong (Kyeryongsan 鷄龍山), immediately west of Taejŏn, and encoded in a collection of late Chosŏn period prophetic texts, *Chŏnggamnok* (“[Prognostic] records of Chŏng” 鄭鑑錄, Jorgensen 2018). One of the more influential prophecies contained within *Chŏnggamnok* alludes to the region becoming the site of a future capital and there was indeed a discussion at the start of the Chosŏn dynasty on whether to establish the new capital there, but on ostensibly geomantic grounds Mount Kyeryong lost out to Hanyang, the site of modern Seoul.¹¹ According to the late fifteenth-century geography, *Sinjŭng tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* (新增東國輿地勝覽, “Newly Augmented Geography of the Eastern Country”), foundations were laid for a palace to the immediate south of Mount Kyeryong, and this site remains a local district known as Sindoan (新都案, “new capital proposal”) or Sindonae.¹²

Taejŏn developed as a city only during the colonial period, being made provincial capital in 1932. After the Korean War, a community of principally destitute farmers following the prophecy was established in the vicinity of Sindoan, but in 1975, during the height of Park Chung Hee's rural modernization drive, the New Village Movement, they were again condemned as a pseudoreligious cult and forcibly cleared.¹³ According to a 1967 survey, Sangjegyo had remained the dominant and most organized religious faith of the Sindonae community (Choi 1967, 73). Its syncretic aspect is described as combining “the three bonds and five principles of Confucian ethics, elements of Confucian ritual, theories of enlightenment and karma from Buddhism, the yin-yang theory of taoism [*sic.*], Sunday observance from Christianity, and the Sindonae prophecies from Korean indigenous tradition” (Choi 1967, 82).

An Unsan's activities prior to the establishment of Chŭngsando in Taejŏn remain unverifiable. Internal Chŭngsando hagiography of the An patriarchs is notably underwhelming. An Unsan is said to have been born in Sŏsan, North Ch'ungch'ŏng Province as the eldest son of Poch'ŏngyo follower An Pyŏnguk 安炳戔, and to have had a revelation on the truth of Sangje-nim at the age of twelve. According to An Kyŏngjŏn, An Pyŏnguk first met former Chŭngsan disciple, Yi Ch'ibok 李致福 (alias Yi Ch'ihwa 李致和, 1860–1944) in 1918, on Anmyŏn island, South Ch'ungch'ŏng Province, from whom he received transmission of the teaching (An 2015b, 665–667). Yi is known to have left Poch'ŏngyo and established the rival sect of Chehwagyo 濟化教 in 1916. An Kyŏngjŏn claims his father led a post-1945 revival of the religion (An 2015b, 668). However, while Yi Ch'ibok appears in Chŭngsando scripture, An Pyŏnguk and An Unsan are notable for their absence.

¹¹ *Taejo Sillok* 4 [1393/12/11]. For an English translation, see Choi 2014, 331.

¹² See facsimile *Sinjŭng tongguk yŏji sŭngnam* 1958, 303, 卷18:連山:山川:鷄龍山.

¹³ See *Encyclopedia of Korean Culture* “계룡산신도안 (鷄龍山新都—)” <http://encykorea.aks.ac.kr/Contents/Item/E0003091#> (accessed October 10, 2018).

In a 1997 survey, cited by Yi and Paek (2015), the names of fifty-one Chŭngsan sects, including Chŭngsando, were recorded with thirty-nine considered active. In 2015 just seventeen remained and the same authors note that most of these were moribund due to a lack of new members. Among these seventeen, eleven are located in North Chŏlla province (Yi and Paek 2015, 268). Within this list Chŭngsando is unique for being based in Taejŏn. The immediate origins of Chŭngsando thus appear to owe as much to local Kyeryong millenarianism and Sangjegyo than to any direct continuity with prewar Chŭngsan'gyo. Thus, in the absence of more details of An Unsan's background, it may be better to understand the establishment of Chŭngsando as a product of the Park era cultic milieu—one that produced such figures as Ch'oe Taemin 崔太敏, 1912–1994), another self-proclaimed messiah who cultivated a personal relationship with Park and his daughter, future president Park Geun Hye (b. 1952), and whose own daughter, Ch'oe Sunsil (b. 1956), would be the central cause for Park Geun Hye's 2017 impeachment.

An Kyŏngjŏn's Oeuvre and Sangsaeng Publications

Chŭngsando's main scripture is the *Chŭngsando tojŏn* (甌山道 道典, "Book of the Chŭngsando way," 1992, revised 2003). Compiled by An Kyŏngjŏn and produced in the format of a leather bound, gold-leafed bible, it constitutes a much augmented version of *Taesun chŏn'gyŏng* (Chŭngsando 2003). In the revised edition, additions are based on oral testimonies collected by An. A final additional chapter details the activities of Ko Subu, though curiously omits any reference to An Pyŏnguk or An Unsan. More stylistically accessible to laypersons than *Chŭngsando tojŏn* are his two-volume series *I kŏs i kaebyŏk ida* ("This is kaebyŏk," 1983; revised 2014; hereafter *Kaebyŏk*) which explicate the specifics of Chŭngsando millenarianism and practice.

An's annotated edition of *Hwandan kogi* makes reference to *kaebyŏk* but surprisingly omits all explicit mention of Chŭngsando. *Chŭngsando tojŏn*, meanwhile, currently contains no mention of *Hwandan kogi*, and makes only passing reference to notions of Korean pseudohistory, limited to the first verse of Chapter 1 (Chŭngsando 2003, Chapter 1, Verse 1). It is only in the *Kaebyŏk* books that both Chŭngsando historiography, including citations from *Chŭngsando tojŏn*, and *Hwandan kogi* are equally incorporated. Therein An frames them against topical global references, and further glocalizes the doctrine through incorporation of Western prognostication and pseudoscience. The *Kaebyŏk* books thus constitute the fullest synthesis of An's doctrinal portfolio, as well as one of the most complete syntheses to date of East Asian and Western pseudoscience and esotericism.

These works are all published by Sangsaeng Ch'ulp'an. Multiple-sized editions exist for both *Kaebyŏk* and *Hwandan kogi*, from hefty thousand-page tomes to light digest versions handed out by proselytizers outside of bookstores. With its publishing house registered in 2005, Sangsaeng is popularly known as the media wing of Chŭngsando. Prior to this, Chŭngsando books were published by Taewŏn Ch'ulp'an. However, rather than Chŭngsando, Sangsaeng is now the common

branding across all books, as well as the televised Book Concerts.¹⁴ In addition to An's main works, Sangsaeng publishes one book attributed to An Unsan (2007), as well as a multi-volume series of "spoken records" (*örok*) of both the father and son. Sangsaeng publishes a range of further titles by other authors variously pertaining to Chüngsando, *kaebyök*, pseudohistory, or exegeses of *Chöngyök*.

Unpacking An's Autumn *Kaebyök*

As explicated by An Kyöngjön, the millenarian doctrine of present-day Chüngsando is that of a coming autumn age, representing the third seasonal quarter of a 129,600-year cosmic cycle. *Kaebyök* is the commencement of each period. This cycle is principally divided into two halves: the first half constituting spring and summer is termed *sönchön* (先天, "former heaven") and the latter half is *huchön* (後天, "later heaven"). These correspond to yang and yin periods, respectively, with "former heaven" characterized by pluralism, contest and heroics, and "later heaven" by unification, harmony, and sageliness (An 2014a, 350). A further respective pair of labels attached to the two halves is *sanggük* (相克, "mutual subjugation") and *sangsaeng* (相生, "mutual generation"), from which the Sangsaeng media group takes its name. *Sangsaeng* refers to the generative cycle of the Five Phases—water, wood, fire, metal, and earth—while *sanggük* is the reverse subjugative direction. Humans are able to live during spring, summer, and autumn, while winter corresponds to a cosmic ice age and renewal. The current period in which we live is thus transitional, a circumstance serving to explain the historical tumult from the late nineteenth century as well as current concerns regarding climate change.

Kaebyök and the other labels are all preexisting terms originating in the *Book of Changes* (易經). Beginning with Song scholar Shao Yong 邵雍 (1011–1077), they informed a Neo-Confucian discourse on cosmology that was elaborated in Korea by Sö Kyöngdök 徐敬德 (1489–1546). However, in this discourse the notion of former and later heaven is metaphysical rather than temporal (Birdwhistell 1989, 85–89; Kim 2013, 382). In the Korean context, the millenarian connotations of *kaebyök* trace back to *Chöngyök*, and to Tonghak, having been emphasized in particular by Ch'oe Cheu's successor, Ch'oe Sihyöng 崔時亨 (1827–1898; Kallander 2013, 106). In the context of Chüngsan'gyo, however, the terms have been fused, or grafted onto the underlying Maitreya framework. Thus, while the specific length of the cosmic cycle given by An is borrowed from Shao Yong, whom An duly acknowledges, the cyclic notion of cosmic time is equally analogous to the Buddhist kalpic cycles informing Maitreya millenarianism (An 2014a, 353, Birdwhistell 1989, 139, and Overmyer 1976, 151–152). Shao emphasized quarterly patterns and notably invoked seasonal characterizations, with autumn being the period of maturity and harvest (Birdwhistell 1989, 134–136). However, as the third season, autumn equally corresponds to the third kalpic epoch represented by the coming of Maitreya (Overmyer 1976, 135–136).

According to An Kyöngjön, the end of cosmic summer and message of

¹⁴ *Chüngsando tojön* (2003) has a sticker with Sangsaeng and a new ISBN covering the earlier information pertaining to Taewon Ch'ulp'an.

autumn was heralded by the descension of the celestial emperor, born as Kang Chŭngsan and reincarnated as An Unsan (An 2014a, 357). The purpose of the cosmic year is to cultivate the crop of humankind, which will become mature fruit in autumn (An 2014b, 69, 294). Regardless of Shao Yong's influence, the figurative attraction of autumn to an agrarian culture such as Korea is self-evident. The traditional autumn festival of Han'gawi had already been emphasized by Taejonggyo, who created the Kaech'ŏn festival and successfully lobbied for its official recognition as South Korea's National Foundation Day, October 3 (An 2014b, 85).

In justifying Korea as the centre of *kaebyŏk*, An argues that the major conflicts of the twentieth century were triggered by rivalry over the Korean peninsula, in particular the Russo-Japanese War, and then the Korean War. An likens this contest for the peninsula to a match of the strategy game of *paduk* (Japanese *go*). Termed “the match of five immortals” (*osŏn wigi* 五仙圍碁), at this match sit five immortals: two playing, two watching, and the host. These figures symbolize China, America, Russia, and Japan, with Korea as host (An 2014b, 248). Citing his own *Chŭngsando tojŏn*, An quotes Chŭngsan as explaining that at the end of the *paduk* game, the board and stones will be given to the host (Chŭngsando 2013, 530 [5: 6]). This same allegory is found also in Lee's (1967) description of Chŭngsan'gyo doctrine (Lee 1967, 16).

More distinct to Chŭngsando, though reminiscent of the Sindonae tradition, An asserts the city of Taejŏn to be the future capital of “later heaven” (An 2014b, 290, citing Chŭngsando 2003: 608 [5: 136], 712 [5: 306]). Here the name of Taejŏn (大田, “large field”) conveniently correlates to the agricultural metaphor of autumn. An also highlights the recent creation of Sejong City to the northwest of Taejŏn, to which government departments are due to relocate, as further evidence for imminent fulfilment of the prophecy. It should be noted that An's own style name, Kyŏngjŏn, also translates as “till[er] of fields.” Of the elements highlighted above, and in comparison to broader Chŭngsan'gyo doctrine, only the special emphasis on autumn and the Taejŏn prophecy are particular to Chŭngsando.

Most unique to An's contemporary *kaebyŏk* scheme, however, is his linkage of this nativist *kaebyŏk* to both pseudohistory and archaeology, as well as to contemporary global topics. While the first volume of *Kaebyŏk* focuses on prognostication traditions, in the second volume An situates the pseudohistory of *Hwandan kogi*, discussed below, within the larger cosmic cycle. Just as the transition to cosmic autumn involves major catastrophe, a subcycle of roughly ten thousand year-long “cosmic months” are presaged by lesser *kaebyŏk* events. Adapting one of the most archetypal discourses of pseudoarchaeology, An suggests that the turn of the previous cosmic month resulted in the submerging of two entire continents: Atlantis, and its Pacific analogue of Mu. Here An (2014b, 96) invokes the authority of the Mu hypothesis creator James Churchwood (1851–1936), together with Colin Wilson's *From Atlantis to the Sphinx: Recovering the Lost Wisdom of the Ancient World* (1996). An casts Mu as a southern “mother civilization,” and Atlantis, its colony. By way of illustration, he includes a picture of the underwater formation off Yonaguni island, Okinawa, citing prominent pseudoarchaeologist,

Graham Hancock (b. 1950), who featured Yonaguni in his *Heaven's Mirror* (Hancock 1998). According to An, however, there was also a northern “father civilization” located in Central Asia and this is the proto-state of Hwan'guk (桓國, 7193–3897 BCE) referred to in *Hwandan kogi* (An 2014b, 79, 112).

Invoking Nostradamus (1503–1566) and stating that those who fail to recite *Taeülchu* will perish, An's characterization of *kaebyök* contains a distinct doomsday cult aspect. In describing the nature of imminent catastrophe, he (An 2014b, 314) cites Casti's *X-Events: Complexity Overload and the Collapse of Everything* (2012). Examples include the 2008 financial crisis, earthquakes, tsunamis, and the possibility of Mount Paektu fully erupting. However, as in the case of earlier Chüngsan'gyo, An's scheme is ultimately salvationist. According to An, the knowledge to survive *kaebyök* has been transmitted within ancient Korean learning, and it is the task of Koreans to rediscover their religion and save humankind. In practice, this involves following Chüngsando and studying *Hwandan kogi*.

As in the above examples, throughout the *Kaebiyök* volumes An cites both foundational and contemporary works of Western pseudoscience alongside Korean analogues. Such a strategy accords with a diagnostic practice of pseudoscience in which, “Obsolete and antiquated scholarship is reshuffled and recombined with older pseudohistorical works to create new ideas and hypotheses or often simply to reinvent even older semi-forgotten pseudohistorical ideas” (Fritze 2009, 13). For the Korean lay reader, further obfuscation is introduced due to the language barrier and unavailability of such cited works.

Twentieth-Century Korean Pseudohistory

The conceptualization of ancient Korea promoted within An's *Kaebiyök* and *Hwandan kogi*, and other Sangsaeng publications, synthesizes two broadly complementary narratives which evolved in close parallel across the course of the twentieth century. One originates in the religio-pseudohistorical writings of Kim Kyohön 金教獻 (1868–1923) who was a founding figure and second patriarch of Taejonggyo. The other is a more secular pseudohistory established by popular history writer Sin Ch'aeho 申采浩 (1880–1936).¹⁵ Both schemes recast ancient Korea as a vast continental empire and original source of northern East Asian civilization.

As a new religion, Taejonggyo was based on the worship of Tan'gun, a mythical figure who since the late thirteenth century had been officially venerated as the semi-divine founder of Old Chosön. From this time and throughout the Chosön dynasty (1392–1910) period, Old Chosön had been regarded as Korea's first state with its capital at P'yöngyang. The earliest surviving attestations of the foundation myth occur in the “Old Chosön” chapter of *Samguk yusa* (三國

¹⁵ Kim's main works were published in 1904 and 1914. Sin's works include *Chosön sanggo munhwasa* (朝鮮上古文化史, “History of ancient Korean Culture,” estimated ca. 1914) and *Chosön sanggosa* (朝鮮上古史, “History of ancient Chosön,” ca. 1924) which were serialized in the *Chosön ilbo* (朝鮮日報) newspaper, 1931–1932. For discussions of Kim and Sin, see Schmid (1997; 2002, 180–198) and Nuri Kim (2017, 205–241).

遺事, “Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms,” ca. 1283) and *Chewang un’gi* (帝王韻紀, “Rhyming Record of [Chinese] Emperors and [Korean] Kings,” 1287). The story structurally consists of 1) celestial god Hwanin allowing his son, Hwanung, to descend to earth, 2) the birth of Tan’gun, and 3) the establishment of Chosŏn. Beyond this, there is limited narrative detail, so constructing a modern religious movement around Tan’gun has necessitated continued emphasis of the historical framing. Within the orthodox narrative, Tan’gun essentially functioned as a symbolic starting point for peninsular Korean history, and was complemented by the legendary figure of Kija 箕子, who was credited with the introduction of civilization from Shang dynasty China. Responding to the catastrophe of the Japanese takeover, from the 1910s, the revisionist histories of Kim and Sin both sought to assert a more nativist Korean ethnocultural identity explicitly distinct from China. This resulted in the diminution of Kija and elevation of Tan’gun (Schmid 2002, 180–198).

Kim’s histories were a constituent element of early Taejonggyo. While maintaining the supernatural aspect of heavenly descent, and proclaiming early Koreans a “divine race,” his writings otherwise function as short survey histories and are said to have been used as textbooks rather than scripture. The most distinct aspect of Kim’s historiography, and diagnostic of all explicitly Taejonggyo-influenced history ever since, is a newly invented periodization scheme for early Korea, loosely derived from the *Samguk yusa* account. This consists of the three chronological early periods of Sinsi, Paedal, and Puyŏ (神市·倍達·夫餘). Sinsi is a term borrowed from the *Samguk yusa* account and in Kim’s scheme corresponds to a supposed period of rule following Hwanung’s descent. Paedal is a previously unattested term that Kim asserts to be a vernacular reading of the *tan* character of Tan’gun (Kim 1904, 82; 1914, 47). Puyŏ is the name of a known, if enigmatic, polity of orthodox history located in central Manchuria (Byington 2016).

Sin’s history, meanwhile, begins with a migration from Central Asia and the establishment of Chosŏn as a pristine state centered on Manchuria, its charter territory stretching north to the Amur River, and incorporating the Korean, Liaodong, and Shandong peninsulas, with further “colonies” extending along the east China seaboard (Sin 1995, 74, 87, 93, and 407). Sin revises the orthodox periodization scheme of three consecutive Chosŏn polities (Tan’gun, trad. 2333–c. 1295 BCE; Kija, trad. 1122–194 BCE, and the usurper dynasty of Wiman 衛滿, 194–108 BCE), narrating instead the division of ancient Chosŏn into three subdomains, the names of which he correlates to the Samhan polities (Sin 1995, 79). The Samhan were historically located across the south of the Korean peninsula but in the Koryŏ period (936–1392) the same term became conflated with the Three Kingdoms and broader peninsular territory (Breuker 2010, 30). Sin went further by locating Chinhan at modern Harbin, Pyŏnhan in Liaodong, and Mahan at P’yŏngyang, each ruled by a *tan’gun* lord (Sin 1995, 92). Following a “decline and fall” type narrative, Sin has this Chosŏn state first fracture into its constituent three parts due to internal reasons, which then gradually relocate to the historical location of the Samhan in the southern half of the Korean peninsula (Sin 1995, 104–106). He then casts the emergence of historical Puyŏ as a revival of continental

Chinhan, and the later expansion of Koguryō as a reclamation of the same charter territory (Sin 1995, 113–119, and 206).

Two further features of Sin's narrative are, firstly, an argument that core articles of Chinese culture, such as the Five Phases, were originally a product of Chosŏn's own religio-philosophical system (Sin 1995, 82, 406, and 409), and secondly, that episodes of Chinese penetration of Chosŏn found in orthodox tradition all played out exclusively in the westernmost region of the Liaodong subdomain (Sin 1995, 89, 103, and 137). These include both the ahistorical legend of Kija, and historical episodes of the Wiman usurpation and 108 BCE Han conquest. Sin thus effected the provincialization from Korean history of Kija Chosŏn, Wiman Chosŏn, and the Han Commanderies. In particular, in place of the longest lived of the Han Commanderies, that of Lelang 樂浪 (K. Nangnang, 108 BCE–313 CE), historically located at P'yŏngyang, Sin argues there to have been an indigenous polity of Nangnang, with the Lelang commandery a namesake for its failed campaign objective (Sin 1995, 114, 139–141).

While seeking to bolster what appeared to be the nativist aspects of Korean identity, Kim and Sin's histories also asserted fraternity between Koreans and other non-Chinese peoples of Manchuria and the Eurasian steppe. Pre-twentieth century Chinese sources had long classified Koreans as Dongyi (東夷, "eastern barbarians"), though through the Kija legend the same sources simultaneously granted Korea exceptionalist status as "civilized Dongyi." In pre-Qin sources, Dongyi had referred to peoples east of Zhou in the region of Shandong but the exonym was reused for peoples newly encountered as the Qin and Han empires absorbed the state of Yan and expanded into Manchuria and Korea in the late second century BCE. This resulted in a conflation in both Chinese and Korean sources of the pre-Qin Dongyi, including a tradition of them having been held in high regard by Confucius, with the later Manchurian Dongyi including Koreans. Beginning with Kim and Sin, and still today, the most universally diagnostic feature of Korean pseudohistory is the maintenance of this conflation but with the Social-Darwinistic inflected interpretation of a pan-Dongyi nation as antithetical to the Han Chinese.

Starting from Sin, a still broader pan-barbarian solidarity was enabled through explicit reference to the premise of the newly introduced Ural-Altaic language hypothesis which proposed a common ethnolinguistic identity among present-day language groups comprising, from west to east: Finno-Ugric, Turkic, Mongolic, Tungusic, Koreanic, and Japonic (Sin 1995, 74).¹⁶ This notion of long-range origins and accompanying epic migrations was further fed by hyper-diffusionist hypotheses that argued all ancient civilization to have spread around the globe from a single "mother civilization," usually characterized as a solar theocracy. Archetypal of the genre is Perry's *Children of the Sun* (1923). The Ural-Altaic hypothesis and diffusionism also informed the Turanism movement of the late-nineteenth century, which was subsequently adopted by Japan to support its continental expansion. Turanist-inflected diffusionism was introduced into the

¹⁶ For discussion of the Ural-Altaic language hypothesis and its flaws, see Janhunen (1996, 237).

Korean discourse by Ch'oe Namsön (1890–1957).¹⁷

Against a context in which Japan imposed its own supernatural mythology as state religion, Japanese scholars dismissed the Tan'gun account as an estoric Buddhist invention of the thirteenth century. In reaction, Ch'oe analyzed the written account using a comparative folkloristic approach by which he sought to uncover elements of an ancient religion predating what he then trivialized as Buddhistic colorations. Adopting a hyper-diffusionist model, he then argued Koreans to be the chief inheritors of an archaic Northeast Asian solar theocracy.¹⁸ In secular South Korean pseudohistory, transeurasian diffusionism exists on the same interpretive spectrum as the more chauvinist schemes of ancient empire. An's *Hwandan kogi* exegesis incorporates both.

As with the question of continuity between Chüngsan'gyo and Chüngsando, a distinction should be made between early Taejonggyo and that which reemerged under the same name around the 1970s. Indeed, in South Korea the Park Chung Hee era witnessed a partial convergence between Sin's secular empire narrative and newly innovated Taejonggyo esotericism. This was effected by an influential coterie of amateur historians who organized themselves into the “Association for the Search for National History” (Kuksa Ch'atki Hyöbuihoe), and planted the seeds of the anti-establishment conspiracy theory promoted by Yi Tögil *cum suis* today (Yi Munyöng 2017, 2018, 92–150). Leading members included An Hosang 安浩相 (1902–1999), a lifelong Taejonggyo believer, self-proclaimed Hitler admirer, and South Korea's first minister of education; Yi Yurip 李裕翌 (1907–1986), the first publisher and likely author of *Hwandan kogi* (1979); and Im Süngguk 林承國 (b. 1928), who would produce the first Korean-language translation of *Hwandan kogi*, appearing in 1986.

Presaging this association's activities is a singularly enigmatic twelve-hundred page work of pseudohistory by Ch'oe Tong 催棟 (1896–1973), *Chosön sanggo minjok sa* 朝鮮上古民族史 (The Ancient History of the Korean Peoples, 1966). Ch'oe was a medical doctor by training and former leader of a Catholic organization regarded to have closely collaborated with colonial authorities (Yi Munyöng 2018, 92).¹⁹ Ch'oe (1966) argues Koreans and the wider Dongyi to have been a tribe descended from the “Turanian civilization of Babylon,” sharing a common ethnocultural identity with the Akkadians and Hittites. He also makes use of a mythical battle of Zhoulu 涿鹿 recorded in the *Shiji* 史記 (87 BCE), between Chiyou 蚩尤 and the Yellow Emperor, casting Chiyou as a Dongyi chieftain.²⁰ This is the first appearance of Chiyou in Korean pseudohistory and this episode is similarly incorporated into *Hwandan kogi*, albeit with Chiyou re-narrated as the victor (An 2012, 190). Chiyou is also the one figure of pseudohistory to receive mention in *Chüngsando tojön* (Chüngsando 2013,

¹⁷ See Allen (1990).

¹⁸ Ch'oe's three main treatises on Tan'gun are *Tan'gun non* (壇君論, 1926), *Tan'gun küp ki yoön'gu* (壇君及其研究, 1928) and *Tan'gun kogi chönsök* (檀君古記箋釋, 1954). See Ch'oe (2013).

¹⁹ See also the *Ch'orokpul üi chaphaktasik* 초록불의 잡학다식 blogsite authored by Yi Munyöng “친일 파의 대물림 - 재야사가 최동에 대하여 [수정],” June 11, 2007, <http://orumi.egloos.com/3223962> (accessed November 10, 2018).

²⁰ *Shiji* 1: 3 (五帝本紀, “Annals of the Five Emperors”).

133 (31: 1)). Possessing a more heroic narrative than Tan'gun, Chiyou has become a prominent figure of present-day Korean pseudohistory, though in reality his designation as a Dongyi chieftain dates only to the 1940s when scholar Xu Xusheng 徐旭生 (1888–1976) sought to equate archaeological cultures to historically named groups and legends (Kim 2017, 168).

The most rigorously evidential successor to Sin's empire narrative was North Korean scholar, Ri Chirin (1916–?). In addition to systematic exposition of—critically flawed—source-based arguments, Ri (1963) was the first to utilize archaeological evidence, interpreting the distribution of diagnostic physical cultures, including polished stone implements, various earthenware types, dolmen megaliths, and bronze daggers, as delineating similar expansive boundaries for Old Chosŏn as those proposed by Sin.²¹

In South Korea, Ri's work was first cited by An Hosang but more fully incorporated in the mid-1980s by Yun Naehyŏn (b. 1939) to such an extent that Yun was accused by academic detractors of wanton plagiarism (Yun 1986). Yun himself is a trained historian who subsequently gained tenure at Dankook University. He is also closely affiliated with Taejonggyo and it is consequently within his works that we see Ri's evidentialism melded most closely to An Hosang's esoteric philosophy. Much of this Taejonggyo philosophy has also been adopted by An Kyŏngjŏn to serve as the content of Korea's ancient wisdom. This includes the three doctrinal texts *Ch'ŏnbu kyŏng*, *Samilsin ko* (1912), and *Ch'amjŏn'gye kyŏng*, which were created within Taejonggyo from the 1910s onwards. One of these, the eighty-one-character *Ch'ŏnbu kyŏng*, was branded a forgery even by Sin Ch'aeho (1925), while *Ch'amjŏn'gye kyŏng* only appeared in the 1960s.²²

Through discussion of knapped stone implements, another innovation of Ri (1963) was to project Chosŏn's *in situ* origins back to the Neolithic and ignore the question of long-range migrations from Central Asia or Babylon, which throughout the 1970s remained a preoccupation for South Korean pseudohistorians.²³ Since then an interpretive compromise has emerged wherein a Manchuria-centered ancient Chosŏn—whether conceived of as an empire or an Altaic confederacy—functions as a secondary point of expansion for Northeast Asian civilization, but remains potentially premised on earlier migrations from Central Asia.²⁴ Pseudohistorians initially placed the locus of this secondary expansion near Lake Baikal, but from the mid-2000s this has been eclipsed by delayed awareness of a ritual site at Niuheliang 牛河梁, western Liaoning, discovered in 1979, that yielded remains of a “goddess” statue. Nieheliang is classified with the archaeological culture of Hongshan (4500–3000 BCE) that dates to the mid to late Neolithic and was long

²¹ Ri (1963) was recently republished by Yi Tŏgil in 2018. For discussion of Ri and the argument that he was unlikely to have been the sole author of the monograph, see Kang (2015).

²² In a recent translation of Sin's writings into modern Korean by Pak Kibong, Sin's criticism of *Ch'ŏnbu kyŏng* has conceitedly been omitted; see Sin (2007, 341). However, aside from Sin's 1925 article, the work is not mentioned in newspapers again until 1966.

²³ Examples include Pak (1970) and Mun (1979).

²⁴ This model is largely similar to Sin Ch'aeho's archetype, the only difference being that Sin locates the primary capital of Chosŏn at modern Harbin.

known for jade artefacts.²⁵ Hongshan (紅山, “Red Mountain”) takes its coincidental name from the type site of Hongshanhou 紅山后 at Chifeng, Inner Mongolia, but pseudohistorians associate the name with their preestablished notions of solar theocracy and mountain worship. Based on the enigmatic finds, ritual sites, and impressive antiquity, from the 1980s some Chinese archaeologists have argued Hongshan to be the source for northern Chinese civilization. Appropriating these arguments, Hongshan has risen to become a preeminent topic within present-day South Korean pseudohistory and receives extensive promotion throughout Sangsaeng publications. In An’s *Hwandan kogi* the material culture of Hongshan is equated to the pre-Chosŏn state of Paedal (3897–2333 BCE).

Yi Yurip’s *Hwandan Kogi*

Hwandan kogi is the longest of several apocryphal works utilized in Korean new religions and pseudohistory, none of which are attested prior to 1920, with their full texts coming to light only post-1945. In themes and content *Hwandan kogi* is broadly similar to the earlier archetypes of Kim Kyohŏn and Sin Ch’aeho, borrowing the periodization of the former and narrative details of the latter. Notable innovations include: renaming the earliest period and state preceding Paedal and Chosŏn as Hwan’guk; incorporating Chiyoo as a Dongyi chieftain of the Paedal; including illustrations of an ancient script that clearly resembles Korean hangul; and providing names for the rulers of these periods. Aside from an initial—arguably metaphorical—descent from heaven that portends the establishment of Hwan’guk, *Hwandan kogi* is otherwise euhemeristic in its treatment of mythical elements. It is not in content a religious text, but serves as scripture for Taejonggyo and, to some extent, Chŭngsando.

Hwandan kogi was first published by Yi Yurip in 1979, but various segments had already been released during the preceding decade in the journal *Chayu* (“Liberty”), edited by another member of the same coterie, “Manchu” Pak Ch’angam 滿洲 朴蒼岩, a former officer in the Japanese Kwantung Army who participated in Park Chung Hee’s coup d’état before being imprisoned for a year in 1963 on suspicion of planning a counter coup. These earlier published segments contained notable variations to the final book version, a circumstance constituting strong evidence that the text was at the time still under creation (Chang 2017, 9–13). Despite its association with Korean ethnic nationalism, the first translation of *Hwandan kogi* from Literary Sinitic was made not into Korean but Japanese, by pseudohistorian Kashima Noboru 鹿島昇 1926–2001), appearing in 1982 (Kashima 1982; Yi 2017). It was only with Im Süngguk’s 1986 translation and extensive annotations that *Hwandan kogi*—or *Handan kogi* as Im translates it—gained popular notice.²⁶ Since that time there have been multiple translations, though Im’s has remained the standard edition until that of An Kyŏngjŏn. In both cases, their

²⁵ On Hongshan, see Li (2008, 9–10).

²⁶ Based on the fact that Im provides no punctuation for the accompanying Literary Sinitic text of his translation and the similarity in annotations, Yi Muryŏng has recently argued that Im’s Korean translation was based on Kashima’s Japanese translation. See *Ch’orokpul ū chaphaktasik* “복도승과 임승국의 [한단고기] 만들어진 한국사,” May 19, 2007, <http://orumi.egloos.com/3180511> (accessed November 10, 2018).

annotations significantly augment the text, but despite *Hwandan kogi*'s association with Taejonggyo, and now Chŭngsando, Im and An's annotations are rationalist in nature, principally concerning themselves with evidentialist explication of terms and historical geography. In this they draw strongly from Sin Ch'ae-ho, Ch'oe Namsŏn, and subsequent secular pseudohistorians.

Hwandan kogi is comprised of five internal books, each with their own invented histories of transmission. These were supposedly compiled into the current work in 1911 by the otherwise unattested figure of Unch'ŏ Kye Yŏnsu 雲樵 桂延壽 (1864–1920). The five books begin with *Samsŏng kijŏn* parts 1 and 2 (三聖紀全 上·下篇, "Record of the Three Sages"), said to have been compiled by a Taoist monk of Silla, An Hamno 安含老 (579–640) and Wŏn Tongjun 元董仲 (dates unknown) respectively. According to An, part 1 explicates the line of ethnic descent traversing Hwan'guk, Paedal, Chosŏn, North Puyŏ, and Koguryŏ (An 2012, 171). Part 2, supplements part 1, providing dates for Paedal and highlighting Celestial King Chiyou. The third book is *Tan'gun segi* (檀君世紀, "Dynastic annals of Tan'gun") compiled by Yi Am 李岳 (1297–1364), who was "well versed in the holy trinity culture and historical perspective of Sin'gyo" (An 2012, 201).

The fourth book is *Puk Puyŏgi* (北夫餘紀, "Record of North Puyŏ"), compiled by Pŏmjang (范樟, d. 1397?), who lived during the transition from Koryŏ to Chosŏn but refused to serve the new dynasty. According to An, "Pŏmjang fully revealed the true facts of Kori and Puyŏ history, constituting nine thousand years of the Korean people's lost history" (An 2012, 277). Kori 豪離 is a variant rendering of T'angni 橐離, known in orthodox tradition as the state from which Puyŏ founder Tongmyŏng initially flees (Byington 2016, 182). The figure of a "nine-thousand-year history" is a diagnostic trope of *Hwandan kogi* informed historiography.

The final and longest of the internal books is *T'aebaek ilsa* (太白逸史, "Unofficial history of T'aebaek"), said to have been compiled by Yi Maek 李陌 (1455–1528). According to An, Yi was a minister exiled by Yŏnsan-gun in 1504 during which time he collected local stories; following reinstatement he was made a court librarian (*ch'ansugwan* 撰修官) and gained access to books stored in the royal library (*Naegak* 內閣). *T'aebaek ilsa* is comprised of eight annal-type volumes surveying from the pre-Hwan'guk period through to Koguryŏ, and extending further through Parhae (referred to as Great Chin, *Taejin* 大震), and into Koryŏ.

An Kyŏngjŏn's Introduction to *Hwandan kogi*

An's *Hwandan kogi* contains the same Literary Sinitic text as Yi's original, together with An's own Korean translation and annotations, further supplemented by a series of maps and an extensive introduction. In the 574-page mid-length edition, which contains both the full Chinese text and Korean translation, this introduction constitutes nearly a third of the book. The hundred-page digest edition, meanwhile, is an abridged version solely of the introduction without any original sections of the translation, demonstrating that for An his framing of the work is more important than the text itself. Divided into four chapters, this introduction functions as a broad synthesis of South Korean pseudohistory, infused to a lesser extent with *kaebyŏk* millenarianism. A corresponding summation of pseudohistory is

incorporated into *Kaebŷök* (An 2014b, 99–224).

Chapter 1 is divided between the standard secular canon of concerns found in Korean pseudohistory, including the perennial anti-establishment conspiracy theory and history disputes with China, together with the invented internal history and question of authenticity of *Hwandan kogi* itself. Chapter 2 then lays out the scheme of ancient civilization and early Korean history wherein Hwan'guk is cast as the origin of global civilization, and Paedal is associated with Hongshan as the source for Northeast Asian civilization. The third chapter explicates the religio-philosophical system of Hwan'guk supposedly encoded within *Hwandan kogi*; this combines content from Taejonggyo with topics of global pseudoarchaeology. The final brief chapter then relates *Hwandan kogi* to the millenarian system of *kaebŷök*. The following is a non-exhaustive summary highlighting core topics and situating them in the broader contexts of pseudohistory outlined above.

Chapter 1. Hwandan kogi, Containing Nine Thousand Years of the Korean People's History

Both the preface and opening sections of the first chapter frame the historiographical relevance of *Hwandan kogi* against the context of recent and ongoing disputes with China over historiographical jurisdiction of early northern East Asia. The main aspect of this dispute, which flared up in the South Korean press from late 2003, principally pertained to the heritage of Koguryö and Parhae, and it is no exaggeration to say few, if any, South Korean popular histories published since then have not referenced this dispute within their introductions. An, however, principally concerns himself with subsidiary disputes over jurisdiction of the neolithic Hongshan culture, the historicity of an ancient Chosön empire, and the location of the Han Commanderies (108 BCE–ca. 313 CE). In this, he adopts wholesale the polemics and canon of conspiracy charges long promoted by secular pseudohistorians, citing among others Yun Naehyön and Yi Tögil (An 2012, 20n15, 22n21).

The seed of this polemic originates with Sin Ch'aeho, who charged that Chinese histories beginning with *Shiji* had actively distorted history to diminish the greatness of ancient Chosön and hide their own military blunders (Sin 1995, 94, 134). According to this scheme, the 108 BCE campaign that historically led to the establishment of the Lelang Commandery at P'yöngyang had in fact been thwarted by an emergent Koguryö, and the commandery was established as a namesake further west in Liaodong (Sin 1995, 137–140). One of the problems pseudohistorians have since faced is explaining why Sin's popularly enticing narrative of ancient empire—assuming it to be true—has not been accepted by scholars in modern and contemporary times. As is a common necessity of pseudoscience, this has given rise to the anti-establishment conspiracy theory, which in the Korean context is linked to colonial-era scholarship.

The charges maintained by pseudohistorians today like Yi Tögil are laid out in An's first chapter as follows: Japanese scholars worked to portray early Korea as a peninsular territory whose state formation processes occurred under the influence of the Lelang Commandery at P'yöngyang and the Japanese Mimana Office to

the south; Japanese excavations of Lelang tombs were consequently fabricated or involved wanton misinterpretation, while Japanese scholars dismissed the notion of Tan'gun Chosŏn as a later invention, and revised forwards the orthodox datings of the later Three Kingdoms polities to the first century BCE in order to portray Korean civilization as secondary to Japan; and finally, this conspiracy has been maintained by South Korean scholars because their own academic lineages trace back to pre-1945 training under Japanese scholars (An 2012, 23–37).

This reductionist polemic is presented as a black-and-white narrative in which current day professional historians are cast as treasonous collaborators, while purveyors of continental empire are patriotic heirs to independence activists and keepers of Korea's true history. It is beyond the scope of this paper to explicate each of these charges, but suffice it to say that they contain both kernels of postcolonial truth and excesses of mischaracterization, in short: evidence for Lelang Commandery has continued to be unearthed by North Korean scholars, the orthodox dating of the Three Kingdoms era polities is proven to be flawed, there is no attestation of Tan'gun Chosŏn prior to thirteenth-century Korean tradition, and no South Korean scholar maintains the interpretation of Mimana as an office of colonial control. Further, while Sin and Kim Kyohŏn were certainly independence activists, many of the Park Chung Hee era amateur scholars, who are the immediate forebears of current day pseudohistorians, had former careers in the Japanese empire and, if judged by the same standards as conspiracy theorists apply to the academic establishment, they would be classified as quintessential collaborators.

The largest dual challenges for establishing Sin's narrative of ancient Korean empire and an early peninsular history undefiled by Chinese penetration is the lack of supportive written sources or monumental archaeology. These two problems are addressed by An through the promotion of *Hwandan kogi* as an authentic history and the concomitant import he attaches to the material culture of Hongshan. Having laid out the secular polemic, An asserts *Hwandan kogi* to contain a true version of history. This he labels as Taehan (大韓, "Great Han"), the same word as found in the Korean name of South Korea, and the Taehan Empire period (1897–1910). The *han* of Taehan, however, he equates to the Hwan of Hwan'guk, and repurposes Taehan as a unifying notion of global history (An 2012, 48).

Turning to *Hwandan kogi* itself, he narrates the fictitious history of the individual books, and the supposed process of its compilation and transmission over the twentieth century. Remaining loyal to the narrative constructed by Yi Yurip, An highlights the activities of Taejonggyo founder Na Ch'öl 羅喆 (1863–1916), and notes that knowledge of *Hwandan kogi* was first made public during the late 1970s through the journal *Chayu*. No mention is made of either Chŭngsan'gyo or Chŭngsando (An 2012, 59). He then lists eleven reasons why *Hwandan kogi* is relevant, before addressing charges against its authenticity.

According to An, *Hwandan kogi* contains the following truths (An 2012, 61):

1. Hwan'guk was the point of origin for both Western and Eastern civilizations.
2. *Hwandan kogi* establishes a direct lineage from Hwan'guk to the

- Republic of Korea. Hwan'guk → Paedal → Old Chosŏn → North Puyŏ (Multiple States period) → Koguryŏ, Paekche, Silla and Kaya (Four Kingdoms period) → Great Chin and Silla (Northern and Southern States period) → Koryŏ → Chosŏn → Taehan Min'guk.
3. Hwan, Tan and Han 韓 are not just names of polities. Hwan corresponds to “celestial light” while Tan corresponds to “the light of the earth.”
 4. Shin'gyo was the religion of Hwan'guk and was maintained as the distinct belief system of the Korean people. Ch'ŏnje 天祭 is a celestial ritual demonstrating belief in Sangje-nim.
 5. The belief system of a divine trinity comprising heaven, earth, and man has been maintained by Koreans as their conceptualization of the universe, and is found in all major religions.
 6. A pioneering spirit of colonization held by followers of Hwanung, the Nangdo 郎徒, was maintained by a lineage that would later include the Silla Hwarang. By period, this lineage comprises: Paedal period Samnang 三郎, Old Chosŏn period Kukcharang 國子郎, North Puyŏ period Ch'ŏnwangnang 天王郎, Three Kingdoms period Koguryŏ Cho'ui-sŏn'in 皂衣仙人, Paekche Mujŏl 武節 and Silla Hwarang 花郎, and Koryŏ period Chaega-hwasang 在家和尚, Sŏnnang 仙郎, and Kuksŏn 國仙.
 7. Numbers and calendrical science were first developed during Paedal.
 8. Astronomy was also developed. Astronomical records in *Hwandan kogi* dating to 1733 BCE were confirmed by Seoul National University Professor Pak Ch'angbŏm.
 9. Hwan'guk's system of governance encoded in the Three Gods and Five Emperors (*Samsin oje* 三神五帝) formula is the origin of modern government ministries.
 10. Hwan'guk had its own system of writing that predates the Sumerian cuneiform script or Egyptian hieroglyphs. This was named *karimt'o* 加臨土 and clearly resembles the Hunmin Chŏng'ŭm script (hangul) created by King Sejong in the fifteenth century.
 11. Old Chosŏn was closely involved with the establishment of the first Chinese dynasties of Xia, Shang, and Zhou, as well as Japan. *Hwandan kogi* further illuminates the history of both northern steppe peoples and Sumeria, the latter as the origin of Western civilization.

Two aspects of point six should be highlighted. The first is a rationalist interpretation afforded in *Hwandan kogi* of the traditional Hwanung descension myth. Here, rather than a literal descent from heaven, the story is interpreted as a myth encoding the eastward expansion of Hwan'guk by the “pioneer” colonization of the region of Mount Paektu, which becomes the immediate locus of Korean civilization. The second aspect of the Samnang lineage is adopted from a similar scheme constructed by Sin Ch'aeho (Sin 1995, 383).

Since the appearance of *Hwandan kogi* in the 1980s, scholars have laid out arguments against its authenticity (Yi Tohak 1986). These have been effective enough to cause purveyors of ancient empire who present themselves as rational evidentialists, such as Yun Naehyŏn and Yi Tŏgil, to shy away from explicitly citing *Hwandan kogi* as a reliable source and it is perhaps for this reason that it has become chiefly associated with new religions.²⁷

An (2012) acknowledges five accusations against *Hwandan kogi* which he naturally frames as a treasonous conspiracy. These are that the *Hwandan kogi* was authored during the twentieth century, contains anachronistic names, contains anachronistic modern terminology, plagiarizes concepts including the Christian trinity, and that the purported historical authors of the internal books are modern inventions. An's rebuttals, however, are premised on the supposedly self-evident authenticity of *Hwandan kogi* itself and are therefore circular in nature. According to An, the plagiarism charges relate to usage of Sin Ch'ae-ho's Three Chosŏn scheme, and to the notion of a divine trinity—described as the Hwan'guk belief system—being adopted from Christianity. In this case An argues that *Hwandan kogi* contains more detail than Sin's work so it could not have been simply borrowed from him. Concerning the holy trinity, he asserts that while the Christian notion is three aspects of a single God, the *Hwandan kogi* conceptualization is of a higher emperor that combines with three spirits into human shape, and is therefore fundamentally different (An 2012, 70).

One of the more persistent charges is that of the usage of modern Sinic terms which are well known to have largely been coined in Japan during the nineteenth century to translate modern scientific and Western notions. These include such lexemes as: culture, equality, liberty, the world, constitution, nation state, nations of the world, industry, enlightenment, civilization, creation, primeval, and evolution. That the usually disyllabic Sino-Japanese terms may sometimes be found in earlier Buddhist and pre-Qin classical sources, either as terms themselves or through coincidental grammatical combinations of their constituent characters, does not undermine the modern context in which these words were introduced to Korea. But An lists such earlier attestations as supposed counterevidence, ignoring that the words are clearly used in *Hwandan kogi* with their modern meanings (An 2012, 74–75). This is a classic *ad hoc* argument based only on the raw possibility of occurrence over likelihood or context.

An's final argument for *Hwandan kogi*'s authenticity is the ostensibly scientific evidence provided by Korean astronomer Pak Ch'angbŏm, who in 1993 claimed to have correlated astronomical records of *Hwandan kogi* to star positions at the purported dates, the example highlighted by An being a planetary parade

²⁷ This has not stopped Yi from giving such presentations as “On the historicity of *Hwandan kogi* and its historiographical meaning” (환단고기의 역사성과 사학사적 의미) at the World Society of Hwandan History and Culture (세계환단학회); see Sangsaeng pangsong STB 상생방송 STB, 2016 *Segye hwandan kogi haksul taehoe* 2016 세계환단학회 학술대회 1회기조상연 환단고기의 역사성과 사학사적의 이덕일 박사 (online video) June 29, 2016, https://youtu.be/mz3Y28Lzr_k (accessed November 11, 2018). In a recent publication he continues equivocation by detailing the transmission story of the individual books, highlighting that these have been cited by North Korean scholars, and that the South Korean academic establishment has condemned the work because it undermines their colonial historiography (Yi 2019, 45).

in the region of a certain constellation dating to 1733 BCE (Pak 1993). Pak's methodology and argumentation have since been debunked (Ki 2017). In this example, two common ploys of pseudoscience occur. One is the utilization by An of seeming evidence from diverse scientific fields—here astronomy—which can rarely be corroborated by a lay reader, and is accompanied by the invocation of science *in spite* of the meta-conspiracy narratives against academic historians. The other is the exaggeration of patterns of correlation to support a hypothesis; in this case, even by Pak's own admission, the correlation of the planetary parade to 1733 BCE necessarily involved a different constellation than that given in *Hwandan kogi*.²⁸

Chapter 2. The Lineage of Succession of Historical Korean States Illuminated in Hwandan kogi

The second chapter introduces the content and evidence of ancient history for which *Hwandan kogi* is taken to function as an authentically transmitted record. In this chapter An broadly marries diffusionist schemes narrating the global spread of a single proto-civilization to the narrative of continental Korean empire established by Sin Ch'aeho. In Western hyperdiffusion theories of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the proto-civilization was typically identified as either Atlantis or ancient Egypt with a subsequent variant being Sumer of early Mesopotamia (Fagan 2006, 125). An, by contrast, places Hwan'guk broadly in the region of the Altai mountains. As a result, a map of the world included by An, with arrows depicting paths of diffusion across Eurasia and the Americas, closely resembles maps of Korean pan-Altaicists, except that on An's map the arrows leading from Central Asia to the Mediterranean and Europe represent not merely the spread of early Turkic and Uralic speakers, but the supposed founders of Sumer and Egypt (An 2012, 82–83). Underscoring the centrality accorded to diffusionism, as of October 2018, a large printed banner of this same map combined with the *Hwandan kogi* periodization scheme hangs in the entrance hall of the Chŭngsando education and culture centre—home to Sangsaeng broadcasting—in Taejŏn (Figure 1).

An emphasizes Sumer as the origin of Mesopotamia and secondary point of expansion for Israel, Egypt, and Western civilization. Representing a variation on Babylonian origins suggested by Ch'oe Tong, the usage of Sumer in Korean pseudohistory traces to another member of the Park-era coterie, Mun Chŏngch'ang, who also proposed Koreans as one of the lost tribes of Israel (Mun 1979 and Yi Munyŏng 2017, 57). In An's scheme, however, the direction of origins is reversed, with Sumer secondary to Hwan'guk, an idea notably popularized in the historical novel, *Sumerian* ("Sumerian," 2005) by Yun Chŏngmo.

Returning to An's map, the Indus civilization is depicted as a minor branch of the westward Sumerian migration, while eastward arrows extend from Hwan'guk to Hongshan (Paedal) and across the Bering Strait to establish the civilizations of Mesoamerica. The Yellow River Culture, constituting Chinese civilization, is depicted as being formed from migrations both directly from Hwan'guk to

²⁸ Interestingly, a correlation with the constellation given in *Hwandan kogi* and likely borrowed from another apocryphal work, *Tan'gi kosa*, believed forged in the late 1940s, did occur in 1940 (Ki 2017, 206).



Figure 1. Banner-map hung in the foyer of the Chungsaendo education and culture centre, Taejeon, titled “East and West world civilization that spread from Hwan’guk.” Photograph by author, October 2018.

the north, and from Hongshan to the northeast. Indicative of their importance accorded by An, within this chapter two full-page spreads are devoted to a special insert on Sumer, and seven full-page spreads on the Hongshan Culture (An 2012, 84–74, 100–113).

The space An apports to the Hongshan culture is to establish its credentials as a fully fledged civilization which he then equates to Paedal of *Hwandan kogi*. As noted, Hongshan has been embraced by advocates of ancient Korean empire as a kind of archaeological panacea. This owes both to its geographical position midway between Central Asia and Manchuria, and to its highly enigmatic remains, including C-shaped zoomorphic jades and a ritual site replete with a “goddess” statue and masks. In *Hwandan kogi*, Paedal corresponds to the northeast Asian empire of ancient Chosŏn described by Sin Ch’aeo as the initial golden age and origin of those termed Dongyi in Chinese sources. In An’s scheme, Hongshan thus functions as a lynchpin connecting global diffusionist schemes of Western pseudoarchaeology—conflated with the Ural-Altai homeland—to the narratives of Korean continental empire traced *in situ* to the Neolithic.

The remainder of the chapter broadly follows Sin’s secular empire narrative with discussion of archaeology, citing Yi Tögil (Yi and Kim 2006), the latter derivative of Yun (1986), and Ri (1963). Separate from the initial migration from

Hwan'guk, An proposes that the historical steppe peoples, including Huns, Xiongnu, Turks, and Mongols, were descendants of Paedal who re-expanded westward across Eurasia from Manchuria (An 2012, 118). Although clearly a strategy to subordinate later steppe empires to ancient Chosŏn ethnicity, this is coincidentally closer to models of westward linguistic expansion of Turkic and Mongolic languages current since Ramstedt (1928).

One further aspect included in An's synthesis of pseudohistory contained in this chapter is the well-known "horserider hypothesis" that proposes continental origins for the establishment of Yamato Japan and the associated Kofun culture. This originates with the prewar work of Kita Sadakichi 喜田貞吉 (1871–1939), who suggested a continental homeland for Japan via Korea and made explicit reference to the Ural-Altai hypothesis, but met with resistance from more nationalistically-minded peers wishing to stress Yamato as its own primary civilization (Kita 1921; Oguma 2002, 95, 312; and Allen 2008, 112). The continental origins hypothesis subsequently came to prominence in the 1960s through Japanese scholar Egami Namio 江上波夫 (1906–2002) who proposed either Puyŏ or Koguryŏ as the point of origin for the migration (Egami 1964, 59). In Korean scholarship the hypothesis occurs either as a 'northern origins hypothesis' and endpoint to pan-Altai migrations, or in studies on early Korea-Japan relations that seek to overturn the pre-1945 Japanese interpretations of early Japanese hegemony, by arguing Yamato to have been founded by Paekche. An, however, breaks a typical taboo of popular empire advocates by expressly citing Kita and Egami, a strategy perhaps to imply that even some Japanese scholars have acknowledged their secondary continental origins (An 2012, 131).

Chapter 3. *Sin'gyo, the Primal Culture of Humanity Illuminated by Hwandan kogi*

In the third chapter, An asserts the religio-philosophical system of Hwan'guk, Sin'gyo, to have venerated a conceptualization of god comprising Sangje joined to the Sansin holy trinity, and which resides in the Big Dipper constellation (*Puktu chilsŏng* 北斗七星; An 2012, 141). Clearly modern in coinage, Sin'gyo is a term used by Kim Kyohŏn while *Hwandan kogi* itself contains only a reference to "spreading divine teachings" (以神施教, Kim 1904, 38–39; 1914. 57).

According to An, the original ritual of Sin'gyo is *ch'ŏnje* (天祭, "celestial sacrifice;" An 2012, 141), the performance of which he asserts is found in Korean and Chinese ritual practice, and further attested in the monumental architecture of other global civilizations. Another two-page spread contains illustrations of the Sumerian Ziggurat of Ur, the Teotihuacan complex in Mexico, the Meidum pyramid in Egypt, the Monks Mound in Illinois, and the underwater Yonaguni formation south of Okinawa (An 2012, 144). In the caption accompanying the Yonaguni illustration, An dates the feature to 8000 BCE and again cites Graham Hancock, whom he claims has visited the location some one-hundred-and-fifty times. In this way, An equates Sin'gyo to the Western diffusionist premise of an original solar theocracy, but rather than specifically venerating the sun, he asserts the *ch'ŏnje* ceremony to have been for the celestial Sangje-Sansin deity, a conceptualization closer to North Asian traditions, including modern Tengrism and Chinese rites to heaven.

An's explication for the transmission of Sin'gyo draws on diachronic schemes of cultural lineages created by Sin Ch'aeho and Ch'oe Namsön. As noted above, Sin's narrative focused on a martial order of aristocratic youth, the Samnang, principally inspired by the historically attested Silla Hwarang. Ch'oe, meanwhile, explicated a religious sun-worshipping lineage he named "Pärk," from the Korean word for "bright."²⁹ Both these schemes made use of Koryö-period sources and esoteric traditions. In particular they exploit a reference to the Nallang Stele text (*Nallangbisö* 鸞郎碑序) recorded in *Samguk sagi* (三國史記, "Histories of the Three Kingdoms," 1145). Attributed to Silla scholar Ch'oe Ch'iwön 崔致遠 (857–908), this text refers to an "esoteric practice" termed P'ungnyu (風流) that combines the "three teachings." Citing the stele, An similarly equates Sin'gyo to P'ungnyu as evidence of its transmission within Korean tradition; he also reproduces Sin's diachronic Samnang lineage (An 2012, 134, 153).

Chapter 4. The Roots and Future of Korea (韓)

The fourth short chapter introduces An's *kaebyök* millenarianism. Here he casts the history of Korea as recorded in *Hwandan kogi* as a previous golden age of cosmic spring and summer, providing the figurative roots from which the fruit of autumn will grow. Hence knowledge of ancient history is necessary to realize the future autumn. An includes a brief history of Tonghak. Therein An highlights Ch'oe Cheu and Kim Ilbu and reserves space to criticize Ch'öndogyo on doctrinal grounds, but while he names the Chüngsando deity of Sangje-nim, he makes no mention of Kang Chüngsan or An Unsan (An 2012, 159–161).

The introduction closes with a short section titled, "The great light culture of the universe that opens again" (An 2012, 164). Providing a distillation of An's complete doctrine, I provide a full translation shortly below. Here An describes future autumn in terms of unification of the "Nine Hwan" peoples. Representative of many such details, this term first occurs in *Hwandan kogi* but contains multiple resonances. It is most immediately a reworking of "Nine Yi" (C. *jiuyi* 九夷), a term found in pre-Qin sources referring to the Dongyi groups of Shandong. The nine Yi are first enumerated in *Hou hanshu* (後漢書, "History of the Later Han," 445 CE), by which time the conflation of pre-Qin Dongyi to Manchurian and peninsular peoples was already occurring.³⁰ Four of the Yi groups are named with colours that match the traditional five-colour scheme designating the cardinal directions and the centre. This scheme was adopted by Sin Ch'aeho to describe the administrative organization of ancient empire (Sin 1995, 81, 380).³¹ Another nonad borrowed from early Chinese sources into *Hwandan kogi* is *kuryö* (九黎, "nine Li/multitudes").

²⁹ This is Ch'oe's famous *Purham munhwa non* (不咸文化論), first written in Japanese and printed in the inaugural issue of *Chösen oyobi Chösen minzoku* (朝鮮及朝鮮民族) in 1927 in Keijō. See Ch'oe (2013b, 49–52).

³⁰ *Hou hanshu* 85:2807 (Dongyi liezhuan 東夷列傳, Account of the Dongyi): 夷有九種, 曰畎夷, 于夷, 方夷, 黃夷, 白夷, 赤夷, 玄夷, 風夷, 陽夷。故孔子欲居九夷也。

³¹ To compensate for the missing colour, "blue" (靑), in their own enumerations of the Nine Yi, both Kim Kyohön and Sin substitute P'ung-i (風夷, "wind Yi") for Nam-i (藍夷, "indigo"), Kim 1914, 45 and Sin 1995, 81.

Originally ambiguous in its designation, an eighth-century annotation to the *Shiji* defines Chiyou as a *kuryō* lord. *Hwandan kogi* further exploits this term for the phonetic similarity with Koryō (Korea). An consequently characterizes the *kuryō* as Dongyi peoples occupying the region between Shandong and the Yangtze river since the Paedal period (An 2012, 320, 401). The trope of unification, meanwhile, corresponds with the “Nine Provinces” (C. *jiuzhou* 九州), a pre-Qin term for China, representing the post-flood charter territory of the Xia dynasty, established by culture hero Yu 禹 who, according to *Shangshu*, implemented the “Great Plan of Nine Divisions” (C. *Hongfan jiuchou* 洪範九疇) to regulate the flood.³² In *Hwandan kogi*, Yu is described as a vassal to Chosŏn from whence he receives instruction on flood control (An 2012, 398–399). Finally, an esoteric correspondence can be made with the “Nine Palaces/Mansions” (C. *jiugong* 九宮), a directional chart of heaven derived from a shared tradition with the *Book of Changes* that is utilized in popular Korean geomancy and divination practices. This chart similarly incorporates the five colours (Pratt and Rutt 1999, 317).

In the translation below, bold text is original to An, a formatting device employed throughout his works.

According to *Hwandan kogi*, the “five colored race of the Nine Hwan people” who lived in Hwan’guk, humanity’s first state, spread out to various locations around the world, cultivating the varied civilizations of the global village. Humankind, which was originally one, split into thousands and tens of thousands of branches, from which the diverse regional cultures emerged. However, when it now becomes cosmic autumn, a “unified single-family world culture” will commence and the descendents of the Nine Hwan people will again live as one family. This is the news of the “Nine Hwan unity” (K. *Kuhwan ilt’ong* 九桓一統) transmitted in *Hwandan kogi*.

Presently the Korean people are placed at the hottest point of collision between the superpower states of America, China, Japan, and Russia. The 38th parallel dividing North and South Korea is a frightening powder magazine vied over by countries such as China and America in an unlimited contest; it is also the last frontline of a future war. The Korean peninsula may soon face being sucked into the vortex of the most intense war in the history of humankind and a situation in which the survival of the Korean people is left hanging. The Korean people and humankind are entering a period of time that will witness the onset of a “perfect storm” (uses English), a tempest of huge upheaval in which the central pivot of human history will change.

With this impending situation, what must we do today? One who loses their history loses everything. **Thus we must make it the utmost task of the spiritual revolution of our lives to restore both the root history (K. *ppuri yōksa*) of the Korean people and the original form of their primal culture.** More than anything, we must awaken from the twisted historical consciousness to which we’ve been brainwashed by the argumentation of academic historians that the history of Hwan’guk and Paedal, golden periods of antiquity, are

³² *Shangshu* 尚書: 洪範.

merely myth and legend. In particular, we must entirely rid ourselves of the slavish historical perspectives: that of Chinese hegemony promoted by China, and the colonialist perspective promoted by the [colonial-era] Japanese Empire.

The most sublime objective of human life transmitted within *Hwandan kogi* is, “the restoration of the eternal light and divinity of heaven and earth, which is originally nested within humans, and the actualization of the ideal of history (K. *sōng’ong kongwan* 性通功完), dreamt of by humans and the heavenly father and earth mother.” Consequently, among twenty-first century humankind, whoever participates in the creation of a new history that achieves this great dream of heaven and earth, will live as the protagonists of a new world. However, if one turns their back on the life of Taehan (大韓, “great Korea [potentially including all of humanity]”) they will vanish as cosmic dust at the threshold of “Another *kaebyōk*” (K. *tasi kaebyōk*).

Eighty million Koreans! Let us all clearly awake like the dawn! Let us overcome the rough waves of the encroaching “Another *kaebyōk*,” and be born as protagonists who create a new history of great Hwandan—radiant light of heaven and earth—in which heaven, earth, and humans are all reborn!

Conclusion

Taken as a whole, An Kyōngjōn’s current doctrine is a synthesis of millenarianism and pseudohistory, wherein each aspect further synthesizes Korean and Western traditions, from both earlier and present-day sources. An’s Autumn *Kaebyōk* millenarianism draws from Kim Ilbu’s *Chōngyōk* and claims lineage from Maitreya-infused Chūngsan doctrine, but has an equal, if not more, immediate basis in Mount Kyeryong prophetic traditions; it further incorporates doomsday-cult elements such as references to Nostradamus and present-day concerns for manmade global catastrophes. An’s pseudohistory, meanwhile, constitutes a secular notion of ancient Korean empire portrayed in *Hwandan kogi* that traces back to archetypes by Sin Ch’aeho and Kim Kyohōn; this is augmented through the assertion of archaeological arguments originating with Ri Chirin but which now principally emphasize the Hongshan culture, and is further framed within the anti-establishment “colonial historiography” polemic aggressively promoted by Yi Tōgil *cum suis*. In turn, An incorporates this notion of ancient Korean empire into Western diffusionist schemes that premise an original proto-civilization, traditionally Atlantis or Egypt, but which, following *Hwandan kogi* exegeses, is identified by An as Hwan’guk and located in Central Asia, the originally proposed homeland of the pre-1930s Ural-Altai language hypothesis. An further marries Hwan’guk to the popular lost civilization discourse, currently promoted in the West by popular selling pseudoarchaeologist Graham Hancock.

An links both the ancient past to a millenarian future, and chauvinist Korean empire to global diffusionism, through the notion of a religio-philosophy, Sin’gyo, having originated in Hwan’guk and been transmitted within Korean tradition. The constructed lineage of Sin’gyo is based on diachronic schemes of ethnocultural spirit authored by both Sin Ch’aeho and Ch’oe Namsōn. The

content of Sin'gyo presented by An is principally appropriated from the postwar Taejonggyo doctrine as developed by An Hosang during the Park Chung Hee era; this synthesizes East Asian esotericism with the syncretic tradition of Tonghak that first incorporated Western monotheism. Through the same strategy used by Jesuit missionaries seeking to evince a Christian god within Chinese tradition, both An Hosang and An Kyongjŏng claim world religions—principally those present in Korea—to derive their notion of a higher being and future messiahs from Sin'gyo.

In searching for an explanation to the continued popularity and toxic influence of Korean pseudohistory, the arguments of which can be evidentially and rationally disproven, it is tempting to suggest underlying religious convictions fed by Taejonggyo and An's *kaebyŏk*. However, in the current case of Chŭngsando, the direction of influence appears rather to be of secular pseudohistory infecting an otherwise benign millenarian new religion. The susceptibility of many Koreans, including An Kyŏngjŏn and Yi Tŏgil, to chauvinistic narratives of ancient greatness may be equally explained as a result of postcolonial nationalistic indoctrination, which in the twenty-first century has encouraged exclusivist claims to historical jurisdiction of Koguryŏ's continental territory. The psychological impact of growing up in a divided peninsula constantly subject to strategic rivalry of surrounding powers is likely also a contributing factor.

In a recent article discussing the Vietnamese new religion of Caodaism, which in itself contains various parallels to Chŭngsando, the authors highlight how Chinese new religions, from which Caodaism directly evolved, developed dual aspects of secret “inner” practice based on Daoist internal alchemy, and public “outer” practices mirroring the social philanthropic activities of Christian missionaries (Jammes and Palmer 2018, 423, referencing Duara 2001 and DuBois 2011). In the case of Chŭngsando, its “inner” practices of *Taeulchu* and *togong* constitute a similar Daoist element, albeit with the ritual and meditative forms and spaces being more immediately derivative of Korean Buddhism. However, perhaps owing to the perceived imperative of preparing for *kaebyŏk*, the Chŭngsan religions have been noted to lack a positive social agenda (Yi and Paek 2015). Only Taesunjillihoe pursued such activities, including the 1998 establishment of Bundang Jesaeng Hospital, though its image was concomitantly marred by accusations of violence (Jorgensen 2001, 77, 82). Chŭngsando would appear to be no exception, and if not for Korean ascetic traditions that have long stressed paths of private self-cultivation, this self-absorption might be interpreted as evidence of a doomsday-cult inclination, which remains a latent possibility. However, I will finish here by contending that the outer practice of Chŭngsando is currently being realized through its very public promotion of pseudohistory. Although an obstruction to professional scholars, this activity is still framed as patriotic, and therein lies the problem.

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