

Chapter III

Indigenous Modernity and the Liminality of Disorder (作亂) in Donghak Thought

Indigenous Modernity and Liminality of Disorder in Donghak

Table of Contents and Research Overview

1. Problem Awareness and Research Background

This study systematically analyzes the indigenous modernity and liminality (boundary-ness) found in Donghak Thought through a comparison of the Eastern and Western View of Heaven (天觀), View of Earth (地觀), and View of Humanity (人間觀).

2. Theoretical Background: The Concept of Liminality

3. Comparison of the Eastern and Western View of Heaven

4. Donghak's View of Heaven and Liminality

It illuminates the creative fusion of Eastern and Western thought and the indigenous modernity found in Donghak's ideas of Sicheonju (侍天主), Johwajeong (造化定), and Yeongsebulmang (永世不忘).

5. Comparison of the Eastern and Western View of Earth

6. Donghak's View of Earth and Liminality

7. Comparison of the Eastern and Western View of Humanity

8. Donghak's View of Humanity and Its Social Meaning

9. Conclusion and Implications

Problem Awareness and Research Background

- Donghak Thought formed an indigenous modernity within the historical context of 19th-century Joseon, where Eastern and Western thought clashed and fused.
- The View of Heaven (天觀), View of Earth (地觀), and View of Humanity (人間觀) are key concepts for comparing Eastern and Western thought systems.
 - The Western ontological thought system (substance theory, the essence/phenomenon dichotomy)
 - The Eastern generative thought system (property theory, emphasizing change and correlation)
- **Liminality means boundary-ness, in-betweenness, and transitionality.**
 - A liminal space where social and cultural order is dismantled and reconstructed
 - A concept for analyzing the creative transformation in Donghak Thought through the clash and synthesis of Eastern and Western thought
- Purpose of this study: to explore the liminality found in Donghak's ideas of Sicheonju (侍天主), Johwajeong (造化定), and Yeongsebulmang (永世不忘), and to reexamine the indigenous aspects of Korean modernity.

Theoretical Background: The Concept of Liminality

- Liminality is a concept meaning boundary-ness, in-betweenness, and transitionality.

Characteristics of Liminality:

A liminal space where the existing order is dismantled and a new order is formed, a field where the possibility of transformation and creation opens up

- Application of liminality in the study of Donghak Thought
 - A creative liminal space through the clash and fusion of Eastern and Western thought systems
 - A new arrangement of the Samjae (三才) of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity in a relationship where "phylogeny recapitulates ontogeny"
- Analytical dimensions of liminality
 - View of Heaven (天觀): the boundary of the formal/assimilative views of Heaven and the emergence of the Sicheonju concept
 - View of Earth (地觀): the boundary of the material/condensative views of Earth and the formation of the Johwajeong concept
 - View of Humanity (人間觀): the boundary of the growth-oriented/convergent views of humanity and the Yeongsebulmang idea
- Donghak's indigenous modernity seen through liminality: not a mere midpoint between Eastern and Western modernity, but a space of creative reconstruction and new possibilities

Comparison of the Eastern and Western View of Heaven – The Western Formal View of Heaven

- Characteristics of the ontological (substance-theory, 實體論) View of Heaven and the Four Causes theory and the Four Elements theory (地水火風)
 - Explaining change through substance
 - The Four Causes: formal cause, material cause, efficient cause, final cause
 - The Four Elements: earth (地), water (水), fire (火), wind (風)
 - God (神) or the Idea as the fifth element
 - The dichotomous distinction between essence and phenomenon
- The cosmology of Plato and Aristotle
 - Plato: the world of Ideas (forms) and the world of phenomena
 - Aristotle: form (形相, form) and matter (質料, matter)
- Western modernity and the change in the View of Heaven
 - Heliocentrism and Calvin's doctrine of predestination
 - Matteo Ricci's Cheonju Sirui (天主實義) and the spread of Seohak (Western Learning)
- The Western formal View of Heaven, observing from the bottom up, divides phenomena into form (essence) and matter (material) and forms an ontological structure that explains change through substance.

The Eastern Assimilative (同化的) View of Heaven

- The duality of the Eastern concept of Heaven (天)

Cheonoecheon (天外天): the Heaven of Mugeuk and Taegeuk that gave birth to Heaven and Earth (the Heaven above Heaven)

Ibeopcheon (理法天): Heaven as divided into Heaven and Earth, Heaven as principle

- Characteristics of the assimilative (同化的) View of Heaven: the property of integrating heterogeneous elements into one

Cheonwonjibang (天圓地方): Heaven is round and Earth is square – a morphological distinction

Cheondojideok (天道地德): Heaven is the Way (道), Earth is virtue (德) – a functional distinction

- A generative cosmology through Yin-Yang and the Five Phases (陰陽五行)

- Unlike the West's substance-based change (earth-water-fire-wind), change is explained through properties

- Explaining the organic relationships of all things through correlative thinking: development from Yin-Yang → Samjae → the Four Symbols → the Five Phases → the Eight Trigrams

- The triple structure of the View of Heaven, View of Earth, and View of Humanity

Assimilation (同化): the property of Heaven (天) – the integration of heterogeneous elements (like carbon assimilation)

Condensation (凝縮): the property of Earth (地) – compression and coagulation (like the condensation of water vapor)

Convergence (接化): the property of Humanity (人) – the meeting and fusion of different elements

The Sicheonju (侍天主) View of Heaven and Liminality in Donghak Thought

- **Sicheonju (侍天主) is a core doctrine of Donghak, meaning 'to serve the Lord of Heaven.'**

- A product of religious awakening arising from Suun's (Choe Je-u's) experience of the heavenly dialogue
- A creative fusion of the Western personal Lord of Heaven and the Eastern principle-based View of Heaven

"My mind is your mind. If each person serves and reveres the Lord of Heaven within their own mind, that itself is the Way of Heaven." – from the Donggyeong Daejeon (東經大全)

- **The liminality (boundary fusion) of the Eastern and Western Views of Heaven**

- The West: the formal (形相的) View of Heaven – the separation of the transcendent God and humanity
- The East: the assimilative (同化的) View of Heaven – the unity of Heaven and humanity
- Donghak: a mediating position that simultaneously recognizes a transcendent and immanent Heaven

- **An expression of indigenous modernity**

- The doctrine of Naeyusillyeong Oeyugihwa (內有神靈 外有氣化), which emphasizes the 'immanence' of the Lord of Heaven
- Forming Donghak's own original View of Heaven through concepts such as Mugeukdaedo (無極大道), creative transformation (造化), and Muwiihwa (無爲而化, actionless transformation)
- Not a mere response to Seohak, but a creative synthesis of Eastern and Western thought and the construction of a new ideological system

Comparison of the Eastern and Western View of Earth – The Western Material View of Earth

- The Western material View of Earth: from an ontological perspective, it conceptualizes Earth (地) as matter (hyle).
- The Four Elements theory of earth-water-fire-wind (地水火風)
 - The Four Elements as the material substances that make up Earth
 - A common structure across the Indo-European linguistic cultural sphere
 - A material worldview connected to Aristotle's Four Causes theory
 - The social structuring of Heaven (priest) – Earth (warrior) – Humanity (producer)
- **An atomistic worldview**
 - Analytical thinking: from the parts to the whole, rather than from the whole to the parts
 - A tradition running from Democritus and Epicurus to modern science
- **The View of Earth as a three-function system**
 - The modern transformation of the ontological View of Earth
 - The materialist paradigm of modern science that excludes God
 - Earth as objectified and instrumentalized nature: a mechanistic worldview

The Eastern Condensative (凝縮的) View of Earth

- The Eastern View of Earth has a condensative character: the phenomenon in which heterogeneous elements become entangled together and solidify.
 - Earth (地), under the influence of Heaven (天), is acted upon by forces of compression and contraction.
 - Emphasis on the interrelationship of Cheonwonjibang (天圓地方) and Cheondojideok (天道地德)
- **The importance of the concept of soil (土)**
 - In the Five Phases, the central soil (土) plays the central role in the harmony and change of Yin and Yang.
 - Even in the change of time, the soil (土) of Jin, Sul, Chuk, and Mi (辰戌丑未) mediates change.
- **Feng shui and the idea of the auspicious site**
 - The feng-shui system that values the energy of the land, and the theory of triadic differentiation (三數分化)
 - The symbolic system of the land developed through the Nine Palaces and Eight Trigrams (九宮八卦) and the Hetu and Luoshu (河圖洛書)
- **The relationship of Earth and humanity grounded in correlative thinking**
 - Earth is the mediator between humanity and Heaven: condensation is the medium that connects assimilation and convergence.
 - Unlike the Western material View of Earth, the land itself is an organic being possessing vitality and sacredness.

The Johwajeong (造化定) View of Earth and Liminality in Donghak Thought

- **The meaning of Johwajeong (造化定) and the View of Earth (地觀)**
 - 'Johwa' (creative transformation) means the result of the movement of Heaven and Earth, Jeong means setting and realization.
The natural fusion of 'incalculations' and talismans and their idealization, reinterpretation
 - The liminality between the Western material View of Earth and the Eastern condensative View of Earth
The harmonization of traditional Confucianism's Ibeopcheon and the Western formal View of Heaven
- **The sanctification and popularization of the land in Donghak**
- **The liminality of the View of Earth and its social meaning**
 - Earth is reinterpreted not as mere matter but as a space of spirituality and harmony.
A social liminality in which the hierarchical division of space is dismantled
 - An egalitarian perspective that redefines the status of the land as the space of the people's lives
The connection of land and the people as the foundation of indigenous modernity
 - The creation of a new social space through 'Disorder (作亂)' during the Donghak Peasant Movement

The Western Growth-Oriented View of Humanity

- **The ontological View of Humanity: centered on human essence and growth**
 - Science and development
 - Maslow's self-actualization: the step-by-step fulfillment of growth needs
- Christian origins
 - Original sin: growth and change through salvation
 - The Protestant ethic: self-improvement, sanctification through labor
- Modern development
 - Existentialism: the human being as a subject who creates himself
 - Posthumanism: transcendent evolution combined with technology
- Characteristics of the Western View of Humanity
 - Vertical growth: from the part to the whole, from the bottom up
 - Individualistic: emphasizing individual achievement and development over the group
 - Progress and development: valuing continuous change and growth as positive

The Eastern Convergent View of Humanity

- **Convergence (接化): the property whereby heterogeneous beings meet as equals and integrate while preserving their differences**

Assimilation (同化)

- A concept expressing the core difference between the Eastern and Western views of humanity
- The human being as the fusion of Heaven's roundness (天圓) and Earth's squareness (地方), Heaven's Way (天道) and Earth's virtue (地德)

Center-oriented / integration

The property of Heaven (天)

and Earth's virtue (地德)

- **The mutual nurturing of Heaven-Earth and humanity: the interaction of the Samjae of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity**

- Geongeongsun (乾健坤順): the human being who integrates the strength (健) of Heaven and the compliance (順) of Earth
- A fractal human-cosmos view: in Heaven (1), Earth (2), and Humanity (3), Humanity includes Heaven and Earth (1+2+3)

Condensation (凝縮)

and Earth (1+2+3)

The property of Earth (地)

- **Correlative thinking and Confucian psychology**

- The harmony of collectivity and individuality: the individual is an organic part of society and the cosmos
- The integration of the inner (理) and the outer (氣), the balance of mind-nature (心性) and emotion (情感)

Convergence (接化)

Syncretism / fusion

The property of Humanity

(人)

- **The social realization of the Eastern convergent View of Humanity**

- Politics: the moral exemplar of the noble person (gunja) and the ideal of social harmony
- Scholarship: the integration of statecraft for practical use (經世致用) and inner sageliness and outer kingliness (內聖外王)

The Yeongsebulmang (永世不忘) View of Humanity and Liminality in Donghak Thought

- The meaning and background of Yeongsebulmang (永世不忘)
 - The elevation of the status and role of 'Humanity (人)' among the Samjae (三才) of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity (天地人)
 - In Donghak, the human being acquires a cosmic status as part of the Samjae, on equal footing with Heaven and Earth.

"Naeyusillyeong Oeyugihwa" (內有神靈 外有氣化): within there is divine spirit, and without there is gihwa (氣化, transformation of vital energy).

- A View of Humanity centered on Sicheonju (侍天主)
 - The discovery and serving of the 'divine' within the human being → the sanctification of humanity
- Social meaning and liminality
 - The institutionalization of egalitarian thought through the jeopju system (接主制) → the dismantling of class boundaries
 - The Donghak Peasant Movement and the rise in the people's status → the effective collapse of the class system
 - Indigenous modernity: an immanent egalitarianism and communal view of humanity distinct from Western modernity

Donghak's Indigenous Modernity and Its Social Meaning

Characteristics of Indigenous Modernity / Social and Historical Significance

- **Structural emergence:** the creative combination of Eastern and Western thought systems and a practical model for the dismantling of the class system and egalitarian thought
- **Trans-boundary integration:** the integrative reconstruction of the Samsa of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity, Donghak Movement
 - Providing the ideological foundation for social transformation movements
 - The formation of a historical consciousness of the people as subjects
- The indigenous modernity expressed through Sicheonju, Johwajeong, and Yeongsebulmang
 - A Korean modernity that was not Westernized
 - A new cosmology through immanent transcendence
- **Contemporary implications**
 - The ideological foundation of the Korean democracy movement
 - The possibility of a transition to post-modernity

Conclusion and Implications

The Liminality and Indigenous Modernity of Donghak Thought

- Donghak Thought is not a mere religious movement but the emergence of an indigenous modernity through the consilient restructuring of Eastern and Western thought.
- Sicheonju (侍天主), Johwajeong (造化定), and Yeongsebulmang (永世不忘) are a creative fusion of the formal/assimilative View of Heaven, the material/condensative View of Earth, and the growth-oriented/convergent View of Humanity.

The Meaning of Indigenous Modernity

- Distinct from Western modernity, the social realization of immanent egalitarianism and spirituality
- The distinctiveness of a Korean modernity in which social transformation and spiritual revolution occur simultaneously

Contemporary Implications and Future Research Directions

- In an age of ecological crisis and a crisis of modernity, the alternative thought system offered by Donghak Thought's integrative cosmology
- The possibility of a post-modernity through the dismantling and reconstruction of existing boundaries such as status, class, and gender
- The need for genealogical research on the discourse of Korean modernity running from Donghak to Cheondogyo to religious pluralism