

(b) The Eastern Assimilative (同化的) View of Heaven

The Eastern Assimilative View of Heaven

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The Duality of the Concept of Heaven (天)

The Eastern concept of Heaven needs to be understood as divided into two meanings.

First, Heaven after being divided into 'Heaven and Earth': Heaven as one of Heaven and Earth, which in Neo-Confucianism is Ibeopcheon (理法天), where the aspects of principle and law are emphasized.

Cheonoecheon (天外天)

The Heaven above Heaven, the Heaven of Mugeuk and Taegeuk, the source that gave birth to Heaven and Earth

Second, Heaven as 'Cheonoecheon': the Heaven of Mugeuk and Taegeuk that gave birth to Heaven and Earth, meaning the Heaven above Heaven, the fundamental being of all things. In Donghak Thought it is expressed as Sangje or the Lord of Heaven.

The Heaven (天) of Heaven and Earth

This ambiguous use of the concept of Heaven can make the discussion of the Eastern View of Heaven and View of Earth difficult to understand, and can become a cause of such confusion.

Ibeopcheon (理法天)

The Heaven of law and principle

The Distinction of the Concept of the Divine (神)

In Eastern thought, the concept of the divine (神), like Heaven (天), is also used ambiguously. The divine corresponding to Cheonoecheon; the fundamental being that created Heaven and Earth

Sangje (上帝): the divine corresponding to Cheonoecheon, meaning the ultimate being that created Heaven and Earth.
The Lord of Heaven in Donghak Thought

In Donghak Thought it is also expressed as the 'Lord of Heaven (天主).'

Divine beings (神明): refers to the divine as the agents that operate Heaven and Earth within the Heaven and Earth created by Cheonoecheon.
Divine beings (神明)

According to the laws of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases, each has its own proper domain.

The agents that operate Heaven and Earth, following the laws of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases

The difference between East and West: the West mainly emphasized the divine in a unified way as only the Sangje of Cheonoecheon, whereas the East developed it into a composite concept that includes the divine beings (神明). Each holds its own proper domain

The Eastern concept of the divine

The supreme God (Sangje) + the divine beings of Heaven and Earth (天地神明)

The Western concept of the divine

Being of heaven and earth (Absolute God) + Ancestral spirits

Ancestral spirits

The Eastern Samjae View: The Assimilative (同化的) View of Heaven

What is the Samjae view (三才觀)? It is the basic system of Eastern philosophy that explains the relationship of Heaven (天), Earth (地), and Humanity (人).
— that is, its basic framework.

The assimilative (同化的, assimilation) View of Heaven: in the Yin-Yang principle represented by Cheonwonjibang (天圓地方) and Cheondojeok (天道地德), the View of Heaven bears the assimilative property of integrating heterogeneous elements into one.
— it possesses this property.

Assimilation means the force that ceaselessly expands outward from the self as its center. Heterogeneous
things it integrates, yet it has the characteristic of forming a master-servant relationship to create order.

Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, the spiritual culture of the East, also display the character of assimilation:

- Daoism – assimilation into nature
- Confucianism – assimilation into the inner self
- Buddhism – assimilation into the Dharma

Heaven (天)	Earth (地)	Humanity (人)
Assimilation (同化) Integration and expansion — the round form (圓形) of the Way (道) of	Condensation (凝縮) convergence, the square form (方形) the virtue (德) of	Convergence (接化) the form of heterogeneity, the round-square-angular (圓方角) the fusion of

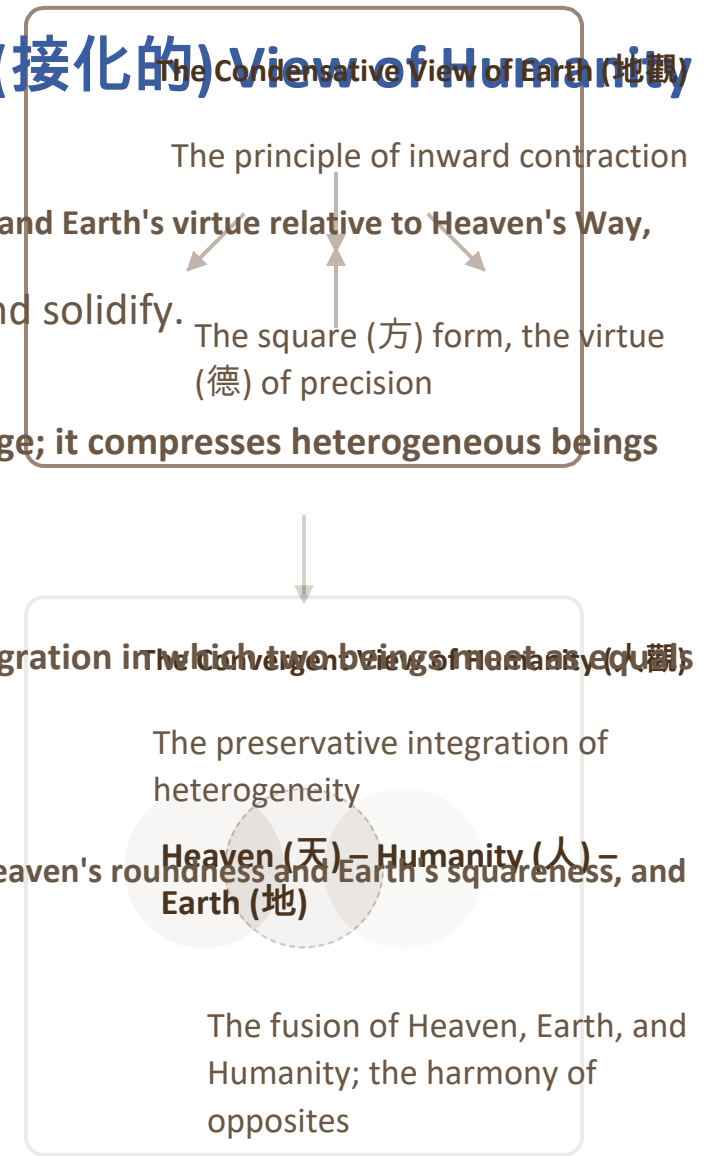
The Condensative (凝縮的) View of Earth and the Convergent (接化的) View of Humanity

Condensation (凝縮) is the characteristic appearing in Earth's squareness relative to Heaven's roundness, and Earth's virtue relative to Heaven's Way, meaning the phenomenon in which different elements become entangled together and solidify.

- **Characteristics of condensation:** unlike assimilation, the components themselves do not change; it compresses heterogeneous beings to form one small unity. It has a force that contracts inward.

Convergence (接化) is where mutually opposing beings meet and blend into one; it means an integration in which two beings meet and preserve their heterogeneity.

- **Characteristics of convergence:** through the harmony of opposites, it aims at syncretism. The fusion of Heaven's roundness and Earth's squareness, and the fusion of Heaven's Way and Earth's virtue, form the properties of humanity.



Comparison with Western Thought

The Eastern and Western View of Heaven, View of Earth, and View of Humanity reveal a fundamental difference in modes of thought.

	Eastern thought	Western thought
Mode of thought	Generative (生成論的)	Ontological (存在論的)
View of Heaven (天觀)	Assimilative (同化的): integrating all things into one	Formal (形相的): Aristotle's form
View of Earth (地觀)	Condensative (凝縮的): the compression of heterogeneous beings	Material (質料的): Aristotle's matter
View of Humanity (人觀)	Convergent (接化的): the harmony of opposing beings	Growth-oriented (成長論的): the growth and development of the individual
Characteristics	Property-centered change; correlative thinking; integration-oriented	Substance-centered change; differentiation (異化) and division (分化)

The East: 天人合一 (unity of Heaven and Humanity), the principle of integration and harmony

The West: 天人對立 (opposition of Heaven and Humanity), the principle of separation and opposition

Yin-Yang, the Five Phases, and Correlative Thinking

Correlative thinking is a core characteristic of the Eastern View of Heaven. The laws of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases apply not only to matter but also to the divine beings (神明).

Yin-Yang, the Samjae, the Five Phases, and the Eight Trigrams had different origins, but they were differences in perspective looking upon the same Samjae, and they form an integrated system.

Correlative thinking, unlike substantive Western thought, forms a property-centered View of Heaven and acts as a consistent law for all things and for the divine beings.

According to Shao Yong's doubling method (加一倍法), these become the integrative principles that interpret the Samjae in more detail.

Yin-Yang (陰陽)

The principle of binary opposition

Samjae (三才)

The three-dimensional structure of Heaven, Earth, and Humanity (天地人)

The Four Symbols (四象)

Wonhyeongijeong (元亨利貞); spring, summer, autumn, and winter

The Five Phases (五行)

The principle of Sanggeuk (相克) and Sangsaeng (相生)

Water

Water (水)

Fire

Fire (火)

Wood

Wood (木)

Metal

Metal (金)

Soil

Soil (土)

The Eastern System of Divine Beings (神明)

The Eastern concept of the divine, unlike the Western absolute God, is composed of a complex system.

That is how it is composed.

- The Eastern divine is divided into the supreme God (Sangje), the divine beings of Heaven and Earth (天地神明), and ancestral spirits.
- Unlike the angels of the West, countless divine beings exist throughout all things in the cosmos, and they operate the cosmos in their respective domains according to the laws of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases. Thus they operate.
- Sangje does not interfere in the affairs of the divine beings, so in the East the supreme God was perceived as close to a depersonalized law.
- The ancestral spirits that humans become after death do not participate in the operation of Heaven and Earth, but govern the union of their human descendants with the divine beings.
- All divine beings perform their roles within the order of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases. That is so.

Sangje (上帝)

The supreme God, the divine of Cheonoecheon, the fundamental being that created Heaven and Earth (大地神明), and ancestral spirits.

The divine beings of Heaven and Earth (天地神明)

Divine beings that govern the operation of the cosmos, dividing domains according to the laws of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases

Ancestral spirits (祖上神)

The divine that a human becomes after death, governing the descendants' cultivation and their union with the divine beings

Cheonjijiyong (天地之用) and the Twelve Fortune Stars

Cheonjijiyong means the movement and functioning of Heaven and Earth.

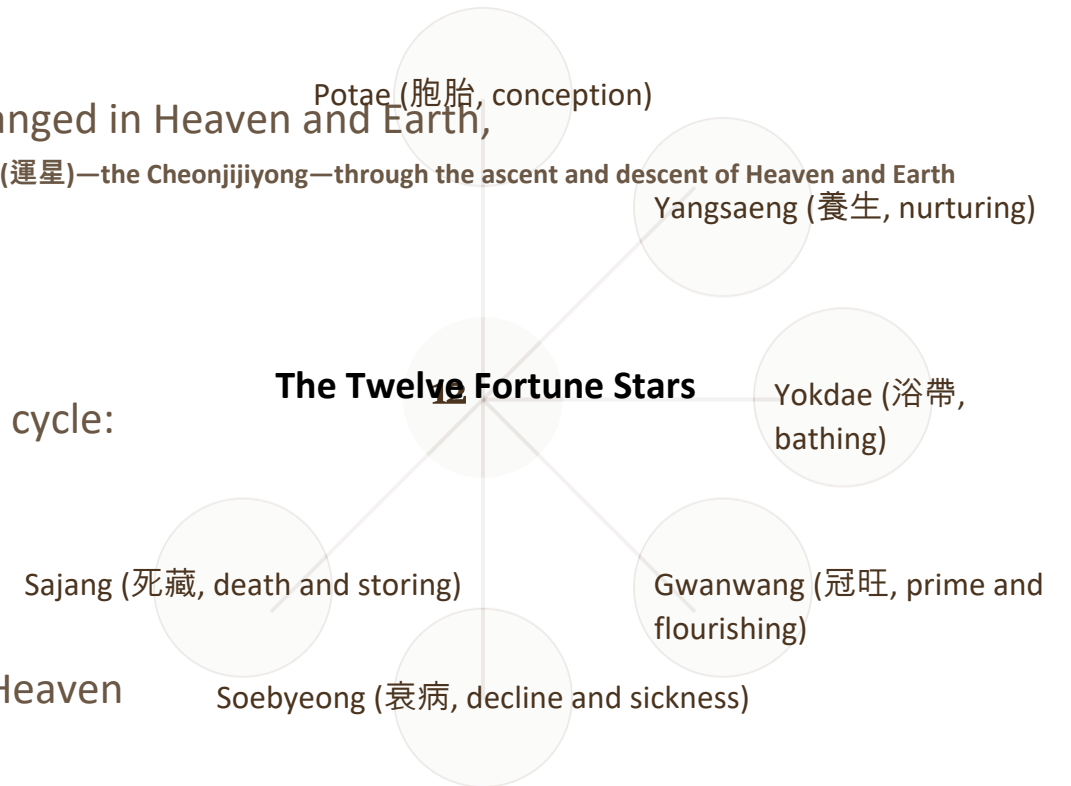
The ten Heavenly Stems (干) and twelve Earthly Branches (支) arranged in Heaven and Earth, for the nurturing transformation of Heaven and Earth (天地化育), function as the twelve Fortune Stars (運星)—the Cheonjijiyong—through the ascent and descent of Heaven and Earth (天地昇降).

Thus they function.

The Twelve Fortune Stars represent the following stages of the life cycle:

- Potae (胞胎): the seed of life is sown into the earth
- Yangsaeng (養生): the earth nurtures the seed of life
- Yokdae (浴帶): the seed bathes in the rain and dew (雨露) of Heaven
- Gwanwang (冠旺): a period of vigorous activity
- Soebyeong (衰病): energy weakens and sickness sets in
- Sajang (死藏): death and preservation

This encompasses the entire process of the birth, growth, and dissolution of life, and shows a process akin to Campbell's twelve stages of the monomyth or to the Ox-Herding pictures.



The Meaning of Cheonjijiyong

If the ten Stems and twelve Branches are like the atoms of physics, then the twelve Fortune Stars—the Cheonjijiyong—are like molecules in which atoms combine to give rise to new properties. It shows that the movement of Heaven and Earth is not a mere mechanical action but is driven by sincerity, reverence, and faith (誠敬信).

Confucianism-Buddhism-Daoism and Cheonjijiyong (天地之用)

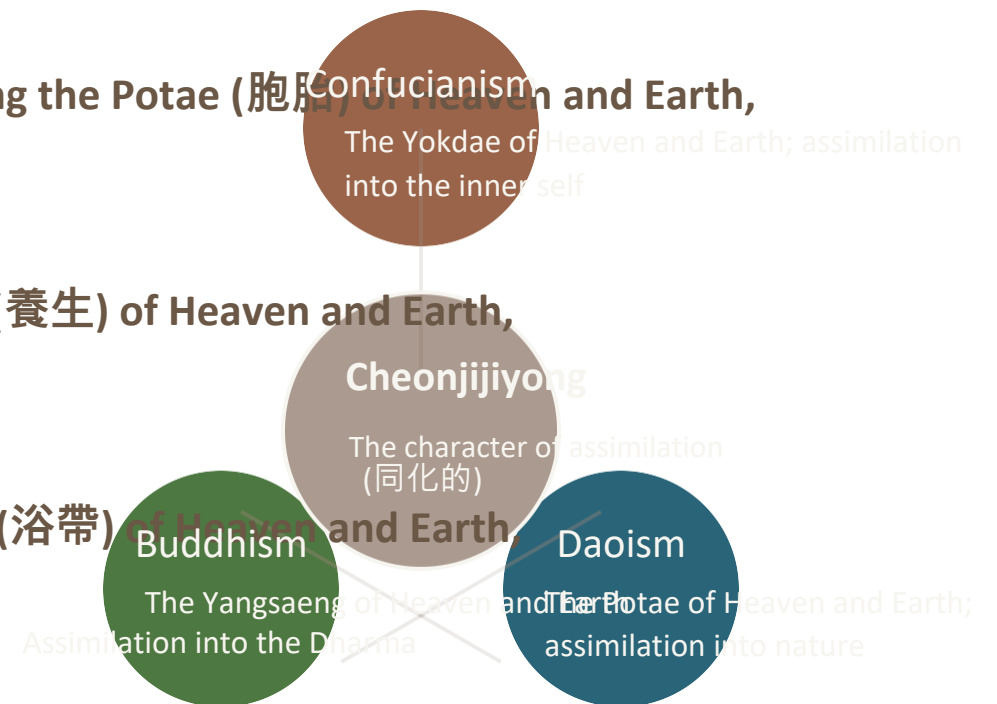
Confucianism, Buddhism, and Daoism, the thought systems of the East, were formed by reflecting Cheonjijiyong (the functioning of Heaven and Earth). That is how they were formed.

Daoism (the Way of the Immortals): a thought of emptiness reflecting the Potae (胞胎) of Heaven and Earth, having the characteristic of assimilation into nature.

Buddhism: a thought of nirvanic cessation reflecting the Yangsaeng (養生) of Heaven and Earth, having the characteristic of assimilation into the Dharma.

Confucianism: a thought of edification (以詔) reflecting the Yokdae (浴帶) of Heaven and Earth, having the characteristic of assimilation into the inner self.

In this way, the three Eastern thoughts each reflect a different aspect of Cheonjijiyong, yet all share the common characteristic of 'assimilation.'



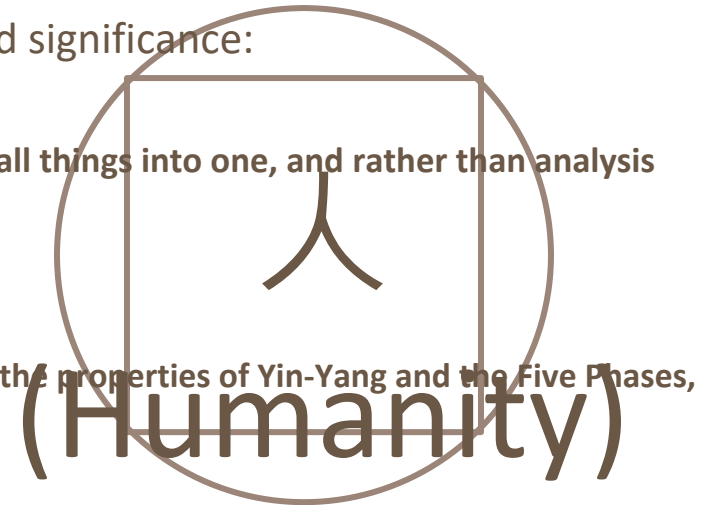
Conclusion and Significance

The Eastern assimilative (同化的) View of Heaven has the following characteristics and significance:

An integrative worldview: the Eastern View of Heaven has the assimilative characteristic of integrating all things into one, and rather than analysis and domination, it pursues the harmony of nature and humanity.

Property-centered thinking: unlike the West's substance-based thinking, the East explains change through the properties of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases, and shows a unified structure within each unit.

Contemporary significance: the Eastern assimilative View of Heaven goes beyond the limits of the mechanistic worldview of modern society, presenting an organic view of nature and a philosophy of reconciliation.



- The assimilative (同化的) View of Heaven
- The condensative (凝縮的) View of Earth
- The convergent (接化的) View of Humanity