

(b) Noimugong (勞而無功) and the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth (天地成功)

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Research Background and Purpose

- Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought are representative thoughts forming the foundation of modern Korean thought, and their views of 'earth' (地觀) show important differences.
- Noimugong (勞而無功) and the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth (天地成功) are the key terms that clearly reveal the difference in the View of Earth (地觀) between Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought.
- Through the comparison of the two concepts, this study examines the change in the View of Earth in modern Korean thought and its philosophical and historical meaning, and explores its contemporary significance.

"The terms that clearly reveal the difference in the View of Earth (地觀) between Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought are Noimugong (勞而無功) and the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth (天地成功)."

Introduction to Key Concepts: Noimugong and the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth

- Key terms revealing the difference in the View of Earth (地觀) between Donghak Thought and Daesoon Thought

Noimugong (勞而無功) • Means "toiled but did not succeed" • Used in Donghak Thought, where the Heaven-beyond-Heaven (天外天) appeared only as divine beings • Signifies that there was no instance of success • Contrasts with the traditional Yin-Yang and Five Phases concept

The Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth (天地成功) • An expression for Heaven and Earth after Gucheon's Advent in Human Form • Heaven and Earth divide roles to accomplish the work • Realizes an earthly paradise through the Yin-Yang union of virtue between Earth and Heaven • Signifies the accomplishment of Cheonju

"In the traditional Yin-Yang and Five Phases, the term contrasting with the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth is the nurturing transformation of Heaven and Earth (天地化育). In ideal notions of the Three Powers such as round Heaven and square Earth (天圓地方) and the Way of Heaven and virtue of Earth (天道地德), Heaven and Earth seek to bring themselves to accomplishment by nurturing humanity, like parents raising children for the family's success."

Noimugong (勞而無功) in Donghak Thought

- Noimugong (勞而無功): meaning that one toiled but did not succeed, a term used in Donghak Thought — where the Heaven-beyond-Heaven (天外天) appeared only as divine beings — to describe its own achievement
- In Donghak, Cheonju (天主) is recognized as a ghost/divine being (神明), meaning that although there was effort on Cheonju's part, there was no result
- Contrasts with ideal notions in the traditional Yin-Yang and Five Phases such as the nurturing transformation of Heaven and Earth (天地化育) or round Heaven and square Earth (天圓地方)
- Donghak's Noimugong becomes the gateway to understanding Daesoon's Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth, which signifies an earthly paradise where Earth and Heaven are joined in the Yin-Yang union of virtue

"Although Eastern thought has many terms for Heaven and Earth, such as 'round Heaven and square Earth (天圓地方)', Donghak Thought is the only place where the germ of the concept of the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth appears."

The Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth in Daesoon Thought

- The Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth (天地成功): the concept whereby, after Gucheon's Advent in Human Form, Heaven and Earth divide roles to accomplish the work
 - Through the Reordering Works of Heaven and Earth that change the suppression of Yin and exalting of Yang (抑陰尊陽) into the rectification of Yin and Yang (正陰正陽), Daesoon Thought gives substance to the traditional View of Earth
 - Starting from Mount Samsin, it reorders the parent mountains Mount Hoemun and Mount Moak and aligns the acupoints of the Mountain King and the Sea King
 - Emphasizes the importance of 'Earth (土)', the center of Yin-Yang and the Five Phases — Gucheon's role is crucial to the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth
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"The earthly paradise that results from the Yin-Yang union of virtue of Heaven and Earth represents Daesoon Thought's view of the earthly realm, in which the Three Realms operate correlatively."

The Traditional Concept of Ghosts and the Meaning of Noimugong

The Neo-Confucian Concept of Ghosts and Donghak's Heaven-beyond-Heaven (天外天) and Noimugong

- Zhu Xi: "Matters concerning ghosts are by nature of secondary importance. In Donghak Thought, the ghost 'form' is the Heaven-beyond-Heaven (天外天), and the concept of Noimugong arises in the process of realizing Heaven and Earth as Cheonju, that is, as a ghost
- In Song-Ming Neo-Confucianism, the 'substance (體) of yi (理)' is only Donghak's understanding of the Heavens (無) and Heaviness (虛) only as divine beings, it explained its own achievement as 'Noimugong (勞而無功)'
- The theory of ghosts belongs not to the Elementary Learning (小學) stage of mastering 'principle (理)' with the mind, but to the Great Learning (大學) stage of investigating 'principle (理)' with the mind, later becomes the gateway to understanding Daesoon Thought's Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth

"In Donghak Thought, Noimugong appears in the scene of realizing Heaven and Earth as Cheonju, that is, as a ghost; therefore, to understand Noimugong, one must understand the existing Eastern concept of ghosts."

Contrast in the View of the Earthly Realm and Views of Japan

Comparison of the View of the Earthly Realm (地界觀)

Donghak Thought

- Understood as emphasizing a philosophy of the life of the earth
- Connection with Korean organic farming methods
- As a Heaven-centered thought, its emphasis on the earth is relatively weak

Daesoon Thought

- Reordering of Mount Samsin and the parent mountains (Mount Hoemun, Mount Moak)
- Adjusts the earth-energy (地氣) through the Works of the earthly realm
- The Works of unifying the earth-energy for the realization of an earthly paradise

Comparison of Views of Japan (日本觀)

Choe Suun (Donghak)

- Perceived as the enemy that invaded during the Imjin War
- So hostile as to be expressed as "You dog-like Japanese foe"
- Pride in the anti-Japanese military merit of his ancestor Jin-rip (震立)

Jeungsan (Daesoon Thought)

- Urges submission to Japan rather than opposition
- Performs the Works of entrusting Joseon to Japan
- Prophecies Japan's downfall and that it "will return home without even receiving its wages"

The views of the earthly realm and of Japan in Donghak and Daesoon Thought show differences according to each thought's historical background and philosophical foundation, appearing as different approaches in practical terms

Conclusion and Implications

- Noimugong and the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth are the core concepts that most clearly show the difference in worldview and practice between Donghak and Daesoon Thought
- Donghak expresses its View of Earth as 'Noimugong', fruitless despite human effort, while Daesoon expresses it as the 'Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth', achieved by Heaven and Earth together after Gucheon's Advent in Human Form
- The Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth develops beyond the existing Eastern notions of round Heaven and square Earth (天圓地方) and the Way of Heaven and virtue of Earth (天道地德) into a concept that realizes an earthly paradise through the Yin-Yang union of virtue and the Gaebyeok of the Three Realms
- In the face of the modern ecological crisis and the limits of material civilization, it provides a philosophical foundation for rediscovering the earthly realm (地界) and re-illuminating the meaning of a harmonious earthly paradise

Significance of the study: through the comparison of Noimugong and the Accomplishment of Heaven and Earth, it traces the change in the View of Earth (地觀) in modern Korean religious thought and provides an occasion to reaffirm the importance of the earthly realm (地界) in modern Korean thought