

(a) Cheonji-Gwisin (天地鬼神) and Cheonji-Seonggyeongsin (天地誠敬信)

Cheonji-Gwisin and Cheonji-Seonggyeongsin

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Introduction

This presentation carries out a comparative study of Donghak and Daesoon Thought centered on the concepts of Cheonji-Gwisin (天地鬼神) and Cheonji-Seonggyeongsin (天地誠敬信).

- Each concept is the term that represents the Heaven-Earth relationship as it first appears in Donghak Thought and in Daesoon Thought respectively, and reflects the core difference of each thought.
- Cheonji-Gwisin — in Donghak Thought, emphasizes the emergence of the Heaven-beyond-Heaven (天外天);
Cheonji-Seonggyeongsin — in Daesoon Thought, emphasizes the Advent in Human Form (人身降世)
of the Ninth Heaven.

Both thoughts, moving beyond the yin-yang conception of Heaven and Earth in traditional Eastern thought, emphasize the existence of a Transcendent Heaven (超越天), and this perspective forms the distinctive characteristics of Korean religious thought.

Cheonji-Gwisin (天地鬼神) in Donghak Thought

In Donghak Thought, Cheonji-Gwisin (天地鬼神) means Heaven and Earth created by the yin-yang principle of the Transcendent Heaven (超越天).

The meaning of the Heaven-beyond-Heaven (天外天) and Gwisin; the function of gihwa (氣化作用)

In Donghak Thought, 'Gwisin' does not mean divine beings but refers to the Heaven-beyond-Heaven (天外天), the transcendent

being that created Heaven and Earth.

Cheonji-Gwisin emphasizes the gihwa (氣化) function by which the utmost energy (至氣) of the Transcendent Heaven transforms to form the actual

world.

"Heaven and Earth too are spirits (天地亦是 鬼神), and spirits too are yin-yang (鬼神亦是 陰陽); not knowing even this, what use is it to examine the scriptures (經傳)? Not knowing the Way (道) and Virtue (德), how could a wise man or noble (賢人君子) ever know?"

— the Yongdam Yusa
(龍潭遺詞), "Dodeokga (Song
of Morality)"

By emphasizing the Transcendent Heaven beyond the Neo-Confucian conception of Heaven and Earth, Donghak Thought created a modern turning point, but owing to the absence of the concept of divine beings (神明) it did not reach a successful modernity.

Neo-Confucianism: that Heaven and Earth are Gwisin is a substantive explanation of yin-yang activity. Donghak

- **Thought: that Heaven and Earth are Gwisin means the gihwa (氣化) function of the Transcendent Heaven. A limitation**
- **exists in that the concept of Gwisin did not develop into the concept of divine beings (神明).**

Cheonji-Seonggyeongsin (天地誠敬信) in Daesoon Thought

In Daesoon Thought, Heaven and Earth are seen as operating through the Advent in Human Form (人身降世) of the Ninth Heaven and the seonggyeongsin (誠敬信, sincerity, reverence, and faith) of the divine beings (神明).

"Life (生), longevity (壽命), and fortune (福祿) are the grace (恩惠) of Heaven and Earth (天地); therefore, with Sincerity (誠), Reverence (敬), and Faith (信), establish the great righteousness (大義) of requiting the grace (報恩) of Heaven and Earth (天地) and fulfill the Way of Humanity (人道)"

— the Daesoon Jinrihoe
Yoram, "Hunhoe
(Admonitions)"

A distinctive feature of Daesoon Thought: whereas Donghak Thought expressed Heaven and Earth as Gwisin, Daesoon Thought expresses Heaven and Earth as seonggyeongsin.

In Daesoon Thought, a person's life, longevity, and fortune are grace bestowed through the seonggyeongsin (誠敬信) of the many divine beings (神明) who operate Heaven and Earth; therefore, humans too should model themselves on Heaven and Earth and requite that grace with seonggyeongsin.

Concept · Meaning · Distinctive Feature in Daesoon Thought		
The Three Essentials	Sincerity (誠), Reverence (敬), Faith (信)	Core of the Daesoon Jinrihoe creed
Triadic structure	Ninth Heaven – divine beings – humanity	Practical meaning of the concept of Sincerity (誠)

Comparative Analysis of the Heaven-Earth Relationship in the Two Thoughts

Both Donghak and Daesoon Thought emphasize the Transcendent Heaven, yet they show clear differences in interpretation and application.

Comparison Item · Donghak Thought · Daesoon Thought		
	Core concept: Cheonji-Gwisin (天地鬼神); emphasizes the emergence of the Transcendent Heaven	Cheonji-Seonggyeongsin (天地誠敬信); emphasizes the Advent in Human Form (人身降世) of the Ninth Heaven
	Concept of Gwisin: 'Gwisin' means the Transcendent Heaven (天外天); lacks the concept of divine beings (神明)	Emphasizes the divine beings of Heaven and Earth (天地神明) and their seonggyeongsin; actively adopts the concept of divine beings
	Perception of the West: as the name "Donghak" shows, it opposes Seohak (Western Learning); the oppositionist stance toward the West	Emphasizes the oppositionist stance toward the West; presents an Eastern origin for Western modernity
	Interpretation of Heaven and Earth: Heaven and Earth as the gihwa (氣化作用) of the Transcendent Heaven; an interpretation surpassing the yin-yang activity of Neo-Confucianism	Heaven and Earth operate through the seonggyeongsin of divine beings; a triad of the Ninth Heaven, divine beings, and humanity
	Limitation: fails to achieve a complete modernity owing to the absence of the concept of divine beings	Complements and develops the system by adopting the concept of divine beings

* Both thoughts aimed at a modern mode of reasoning surpassing existing Neo-Confucianism, but they differ in method and emphasis.