

A Study on the Research History of *Cheonbugyeong*

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This paper is about *Cheonbugyeong*, a book considered to be “a forged book” by historians affiliated with academic institutions. Since some presume *Cheonbugyeong* is a “genuinely forged book,” this paper will include the philology of *Cheonbugyeong*. While this paper is on the ideological meanings and their turning points, this work will not undertake to illustrate *Cheonbugyeong* from a new perspective. Instead, this paper focuses on who has dealt with *Cheonbugyeong*, the reason behind their research, the different interpretations, and how each interpreter is creating an ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong*.

Keywords: *Cheonbugyeong*, philological understanding, research history, the ideological meaning, epistemologically pervasive effect

Introduction

Cheonbugyeong (天符經)¹ is a book that has been placed in the category of so-called “forged book” by historians affiliated with academic institutions (hereinafter referred to as affiliated historians.) This paper will include the philology of *Cheonbugyeong* because there is an on-going debate concerning its authenticity. Although this paper is on the ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong* and its turning points, this work will not introduce a new analysis like many interpretive books. Instead, this paper will focus on who has dealt with *Cheonbugyeong* and

1. It explains the principle of the universe—heaven, earth, and man.

what the reason is, the different interpretations, and how each interpreter is creating an ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong*. The following quote by a religious scholar against historians not affiliated with academic institutions (hereinafter referred to as non-affiliated historians) shows such an awareness of the issues.

Mythology acts as a rule to show the difference between the fact that has to be and the meaning of the fact that has to be.... Now we have to think why the books by historians not associated with academic institutions are very popular with the public. (Kang Don-ku 2000: 25)

The remarkable part is that works by non-affiliated historians are “playing a part in looking for facts that should exist and on giving a certain meaning to those facts.” Because of the role conducted by these historians, the so-called “forged books” including *Hwandangogi* (桓檀古記) are coming to the attention of the public.² Instead of the dichotomous schema of “genuinely forged books” that non-affiliated historians are giving meaning to on their own, attention must be paid to the types and logical connections that they are giving to certain texts and the cognitive effects of such meanings.

Cheonbugyeong is creating a great deal of interest with the public these days along with *Hwandangogi*. The reason for the public interest in *Cheonbugyeong* and *Hwandangogi* is because of the origination and the whole texts that are included in *Hwandangogi* under *Sodogyongjeonbonhun* of *Taebaekilsa* (太白逸史).³ What is included under *Sodogyongjeonbonhun* cannot be accepted by affiliated historians based upon historical records because they consider *Hwandangogi*, a book which includes the origination and the whole text of *Cheonbugyeong*, in the category of forged book.

Hwandangogi being considered “a forged book” in the category of “genuinely forged books” is not a recent hypothesis. This trend could already be found in the case of Shin Chae-ho who lived during the Japanese colonial period. Nonetheless, not all affiliated historians have the same awareness about the problems with *Hwandangogi*. For instance, some scholars deal with the socio-cultural effects of *Hwandangogi* regardless of its authenticity (Yoon Myeong-

2. There is an explanation about orient-Joseon in *Hwadangogi*.

3. The book includes the story of *Cheonbugyeong*.

cheol 2000). However, in Yoon's book the author places *Hwandangogi* in the category of forged book. If affiliated historians continue to deem *Hwandangogi* as "a forged book" in their writings, they must be cautious not to make readers of *Hwandangogi* feel degraded. These days, it is required of us to step forward with an up-to-date view of books that the public is interested in.

Cheonbugyeong, a book that is a part of *Hwandangogi*, has interested the public regardless of its authenticity and its effect has not been weakened. More books on *Cheonbugyeong* are being published every year. The ideological and socio-cultural effects of *Cheonbugyeong* are too powerful in our society to simply consider it a forgery that should be discarded. Under current conditions, a new approach is now required rather than being irrational towards *Cheonbugyeong* and phenomena occurring around it.

The following sections will look at the interpreters' position (ideological meaning) along with the research history and trends of *Cheonbugyeong*. Part two will deal mainly with establishing backgrounds and circulatory circumstances while looking at how each group (affiliated historians, non-affiliated historians, and religious circles) understands *Cheonbugyeong* philologically. Part three will deal with the research history and trends of *Cheonbugyeong* by affiliated historians, non-affiliated historians, and religious circles. Part four will point out the portions of *Cheonbugyeong* which have divergent points of interpretation and ideological meaning and will show how non-affiliated historians and religious circles are presenting the ideological meaning. The conclusion will briefly summarize this paper's points and will provide some issues for future discussion.

Philological Understanding of *Cheonbugyeong*: Formational Background and Transmission method

The philology of a book means to objectively describe the book's author, publishing period, purpose, and circulatory circumstances. In the case of *Cheonbugyeong*, historians have not performed a thorough philological examination. According to researchers, *Cheonbugyeong* was passed down into different versions (Damul Minjok Yeonguso 1993: 14). They are *Sajeok* version by Choe Chiwon (崔致遠, 857-?), *Seokbyeok* version at Mt. Myohyang, *Cheonbimun* version by Ki Jungjin (寄正鎭), and *Taebaekilsa* version by Yi Maek who was a Chansugwan (an official that works on the compilation of

books) during the reign of King Jungjong of the Joseon dynasty. The one most people read is the *Seokbyeokbon* from Myohyangsan. Historical circles do not believe in its authenticity but, instead treat *Cheonbugyeong* as “a forged book” like *Hwandangogi*. Unlike historians associated with academic institutions, non-affiliated historians do not consider *Cheonbugyeong* a forged book; instead, they analyze it from various angles. Also *Cheonbugyeong* is an official scripture recited during Daejonggyo’s Sunday ritual.⁴ The philology of *Cheonbugyeong* is based upon the Daejonggyo stand point but will occasionally mention the philology from the stand point of affiliated historians as well as non-affiliated historians. The philology will confirm people’s current point of recognition of *Cheonbugyeong* by examining the establishing background and its circulatory circumstances.

Cheonbugyeong is one of three official scriptures along with *Samilsingo* and *Chamjeongyegyong* in Daejonggyo. According to *Daejonggyoyogam* *Cheonbugyeong* is a true scripture that interprets the principle of harmony in relation to the creation of the universe using the principles of harmony, reclamation and control controlled by Hwanin, Hwanung, and Dangun. As a true scripture it also elucidates the eternal path of birth, growth, aging, sickness, and death of *cheonjiin samgeuk*(天地人 三極) using numbers 1 to 10. No one knows why but for thousands of years, the book went undiscovered by people. In 1916 Gye Yeonsu discovered it on a stone wall in Mt. Taebaek and presented it to Daejonggyo (Dangungyo) in 1917 by making a rubbed copy. The details are given in Daejonggyo jongrimundap.

Our people have three holy books: *Cheonbugyeong* for harmony, *Samilsingo* for reclamation, *Chamjeongyegyong* for regulation. *Cheonbugyeong* is a hieroglyphic record of heavenly law with eighty-one words. It was written in nokdo characters (characters from ancient times) by Sinji Hyeondeok, and Choe Chiwon from Silla transcribed it into Chinese characters. Nobody knew the book existed until Gye Yeonsu found this book on a stone wall of Myohyangsan(Mt.) and sent it to Daejonggyo. (Kim Mun-gyeong 2000: 23-5)

4. Daejonggyo is a new religion established by Na Cheol in 1909. It respects the father of the Korean race.

Cheonbugyeong explains the principle of the universe's creation in 81 characters to teach the principle of harmony. The law of the creation of the universe is when Dangun came down to Sindansu in Taebaeksan, opened Sinsi, and ruled the people with benevolence. The author of this text is Sinji who was led by Dangun, and it was recorded in *nokdo*(鹿圖) characters. During the time of Silla, Choe Chiwon changed the *nokdo* characters to Chinese characters for better understanding. Since it was Confucius' Analects that people read avidly, most people forgot about the Chinese characters version of *Cheonbugyeong*. Gye Yeonsu who knew about the existence of the Chinese characters version tried to acquire *Cheonbugyeong* but failed and spent 10 years picking medicinal herbs from famous mountains. In September 1916, Gye Yeonsu unexpectedly discovered the Chinese characters version of *Cheonbugyeong* inscribed on a stone wall in Myohyangsan and he made a rubbing of it even though he could not understand its meaning. That same year he heard a rumor that there was a Dangunyo in Seoul. In 1917 he sent a letter and *Cheonbugyeong* with a person returning to Seoul to give the items to Daejonggyo.

In Daejonggyo they are factualizing Dangun by establishing the background of *Cheonbugyeong*. It is apparent that in Daejonggyo, *Cheonbugyeong* and Dangun are closely related (Kim Mun-gyeong 2000: 23-5). Since *Cheonbugyeong* was given to Daejonggyo in 1917, it wasn't an original scripture from the time of Daejonggyo's establishment eight years prior. Today Daejonggyo places *Cheonbugyeong* as a *Johwagyeong* by making it an official scripture but this was not so in 1917. By looking at *Hongamjongsa* and *Danaejongsa* from Daejonggyo, it is apparent that *Cheonbugyeong* was not taken seriously prior to 1917. The Daejonggyo Order of June 1975 sanctioned *Cheonbugyeong* as an official scripture along with pallihun, which is *Chihwagyeong* or *Chamjeongyegyong*. It first appeared as a scripture with a position of *Johwagyeong* in Daejonggyoyogam in 1983 (Kim Jeong-sin 1987: 33-49).

The origins of *Cheonbugyeong* mentioned by non-affiliated historians are similar to Daejonggyo's understanding but instead they quote mainly from *Hwandangogi* and *Taebaekilsa*. According to the *Sodogyongjeonbonhun* in *Taebaekilsa*, the Chinese characters version of *Cheonbugyeong* was a scripture handed down orally from Hwanguk and recorded in Nokdomun by Sinji Hyeondeok by order of Hwanung who descended from heaven. Later, Choe Chiwon transcribed it into Chinese characters from an old tombstone written in *jeonseo* by Sinji and passed it on to the world. Although the terminology and

settings are slightly different, when one compares the related contents from *Cheonbugyeong* by Choe Dong-hwan, it is apparent that non-affiliated historians are quoting from *Hwandangogi* almost exactly (Choe Dong-hwan 2000a: 115).

Affiliated historians take a critical attitude towards non-affiliated historians' lack of evidential sources. Except for papers that identify *Hwandangogi*, *Gyuwonsahwa*, *Sindansilgi*, and *Dangigosa* as forged books, there are almost no papers targeting only *Cheonbugyeong* by affiliated historians. Since the original words of *Cheonbugyeong* are included in *Hwandangogi*, when *Hwandangogi* is criticized as a forgery, *Cheonbugyeong* is also criticized as a forged book. Non-affiliated historians are well aware of evidential research results conducted by the affiliated historians and have tried to complement the philological contents of *Cheonbugyeong* by exposing the evidential path of the *Hwandangogi* in order to counteract the claim made by affiliated historians. Two examples are Hwang Gwanguk, the head of academic affairs in Hanbaedal Cheongnyeonhoe, and Bang Yongshik, a professor at Daejeonbogeon College. Hwang Gwanguk's *Cheonbugyeongui jeollaee gwanhan ilgochal* insisted that there are two kinds of *Cheonbugyeong*; one was written in a book and the other was inscribed on a stone wall with a known path of transmission. Using various materials, Bang Yongshik insisted that *Cheonbugyeong* had two different scriptures: one was a *Seokbyeok* version expressed in picture and the other was a *danmok* expressed in written form. Based upon their explanations of *Cheonbugyeong*, it is apparent that their intentions are quite different from affiliated historians. Unlike affiliated historians, who include *Cheonbugyeong* in the category of forged book, Hwang Gwanguk and Bang Yongshik, by complementing the philological contents, reveal that *Cheonbugyeong* explains part of the ancient history of the Han people.

It has been shown that the religious circles, affiliated and non-affiliated historians view the philology (establishment background and the circulatory circumstances) of *Cheonbugyeong* in different ways. Daejonggyo considers *Cheonbugyeong* as a *Johwageong*, recorded words of Dangun by Sinji, and they recognize it religiously, and sometimes occultly. The affiliated historians view *Cheonbugyeong* as something intentionally made by somebody and circulated, but the non-affiliated historians have a positive stand towards *Cheonbugyeong* and attempt to change its philological understanding. Therefore, it is clear that affiliated historians and Daejonggyo are at odds with each other over *Cheonbugyeong*. While non-affiliated historians and Daejonggyo do not have the exact same views, their differences lie in the recog-

dition and the time of appearance of Dangun. Therefore, when looking at historical research and research trends of *Cheonbugyeong*, one must bear in mind that these three groups have different viewpoints depending on the context. The next part will look at the research history and research trends and distinguish the research boundaries of the three parties.

The Research History and Trend of *Cheonbugyeong*

Research on *Cheonbugyeong* is largely divided into three groups: affiliated historians, non-affiliated historians, and religious circles. This section will first provide a complete research history and in the second half reconstruct the research trends of each group. Few research papers have been written by affiliated historians on *Cheonbugyeong*. Since the original *Cheonbugyeong* is in *Hwandangogi*, the criticism toward *Cheonbugyeong* is the same as leveled against *Hwandangogi*. In this context, papers criticizing works as a forgery can be connected to the research history on *Cheonbugyeong*. The research trend of *Cheonbugyeong* by affiliated historians is based upon forgery arguments. Works related to forgery arguments by affiliated historians are Lee Do-hak (1986) and Jo In-seong (1987, 2000).

Since there are almost no papers written about *Cheonbugyeong* by affiliated historians, it is still placed in the category of forged book. Placing *Cheonbugyeong* in the category of forged book by historical circles is not a recent development. Historian Shin Chae-ho(1995) pointed out from “wiseoui byeonbyeolgwa seontaegae daehayeo” in *Joseon Sanggosa* that, because it was evident that *Samilsingo* and *Cheonbugyeong* “appeared for the first time in these days,” people did not need to consider them as forged books because everyone knew at that time that they were not old books. During ancient times the country had cases of burning treasured books but never had any cases of forging books. When *Cheonbugyeong* and *Samilsingo* appeared for the first time there was no one to approve them as old books without confutations from anyone. Therefore *Cheonbugyeong* at that time was considered a forged book as a matter of course.

The research works about *Cheonbugyeong* by non-affiliated historians are divided into two. One is to publish books explaining *Cheonbugyeong* and the other is to write papers in response to forgery claims by affiliated historians. There are some books explaining *Cheonbugyeong* but not many books have come out so far arguing against the claim of forgery. The explanatory books deal

only a little bit with the forgery claim. Son Gyeong-sik (2001), Yun Hae-seok (2000), Choe Dong-hwan (2000a), Choe Dong-hwan (2000b), Song Ho-su (2000), Gwon Tae-hun (1999), Jo Ha-seon (1998), Hanmunhwa pyeonjipbu (1998), Je Sangjae (1997), Mun Jae-hyeon (1997), Lee Seong-jae (1995), Hanbaedal pyeonjipbu (1994), Song Ho-su (1992), Song Ho-su (1991), and Lee Jin-jin (1989) have written explanatory books and related papers on *Cheonbugyeong* since the mid-80s.

When writing about *Cheonbugyeong*, the majority of authors quote from or refer to books by Song Ho-su. The entire research trend is based upon books devoted mainly to *Cheonbugyeong* by him. Based upon Song Ho-su's analysis (1984; 2000), *Cheonbugyeong* is dealt with in unison with the two other books rather than being looked at independently. This is because the three books are understood in relationship to *Johwagyeong-Gyohwagyeong-Chihwagyeong* among the composition of Hwanin-Hwanung-Dangun. These three books each have a different ascetic function, but they are largely interpreted within the category of *Gaecheongyeong*. The majority of non-affiliated historians' books quote Song Ho-su's idea of *Cheonbugyeong* in relation to the *gaecheon* ideology of the Han people.

Non-affiliated historians should pay special attention to "*Cheonbugyeong yeongu*," a research paper collection published by Hanbaedal Pyeonjipbu after The *Cheonbugyeong* Academic Conference in 1994. Out of the 28 research papers, only the following seven contain footnotes and direct research about *Cheonbugyeong*: "Cheonbugyeongui jeonrae daehan ilgochal" by Hwang Gwanguk, "Cheonbugyeong natanan 'han'ui cheolhakjeok jonjaerongwa geu hangukjeok ihae" by Min Yeonghyeon, "*Cheonbugyeongui hwanyeokgwa gwa-hakcheolhak*" by Lee Huitae, "*Jeongsincheolhaktongpyeon gwonjiil*" by Jeon Byeonghun, "*Cheonbugyeongui haedokgwa wonhyeongsasang*" by Park Yongsuk, "*Cheonbugyeongui jojikronjeok haeseok*" by Lee Gangsik, and "*Cheonbugyeong daehan yeongu*" by Bang Yongshik. Most begin with the assumption that *Cheonbugyeong* contains a unique ideology about the Han people, and the research trend is to interpret *Cheonbugyeong* in relation to *ujuron*, *inganjonjae*, and *ingansimseongron*.

There have only been a few research papers about *Cheonbugyeong* written by religious circles. The six papers from research paper collection, "*Cheonbugyeong yeongu*," include: "Han malsseum" (*Cheonbugyeong*) by Song Wonhong of Dangungyo, "Cheonbugyeong haeseol" by No Daehaeng of Buddhism, "Cheonbugyeong" by Tan Heo of Buddhism, "Ungidanbeop euro

barabon cheonbugyeong inganwanseongui wonri” by Lee Seunghoon of Hangukdanhakhyeophoe, “Hyeondaemullihageuro barabon cheonbugyeong” by Han Jeonggyun of Danhakseonwon, and “Cheonbugyeongui silcheonjeok haeseok” by Kim Yeonggi of Daejonggyo. Each author presents his own views about *Cheonbugyeong* according to the context that he is placed in as well as interprets *Cheonbugyeong* using his own evidential attitudes.

Since Daejonggyo adopted *Cheonbugyeong* as a scripture, there is only one independent paper, “Cheonbugyeong-ui silcheonjok haeseok” by Kim Yeonggi. In the part dealing with “ethnics,” *Cheonbugyeong* is only mentioned a little when emphasizing “roots” or “*eol*” of the Han people. Instead of publishing research papers, Daejonggyo discusses *Cheonbugyeong* in its monthly newspaper and on its internet homepage. Daejonggyo answers questions from the public about *Cheonbugyeong* in the “*jonglimundap*” corner of its monthly newspaper and internet homepage. Instead of *Cheonbugyeong* being an independent research field, Daejonggyo requires its memorization for their ritual process because of Gye Yeonsu’s letter to Daejonggyo in 1917 stating one receives a blessing when one reads the book. Gye Yeonsu believed that “a calamity turns out to be an auspiciousness and an ill-natured person turns into a good person,” and when read for a long time, he believed in “the prosperity of one’s offspring, a long life, and a continuance of being rich,” as well as that ‘no matter how silly a person is, he or she can escape a disaster when the book was possessed.’

The following section, based upon the research history, will detail the research trends of affiliated historians, non-affiliated historians and religious circles. Affiliated historians believe that *Cheonbugyeong* is too short a text to write a paper about. Also, since it is written in *hanmun*, it can be interpreted differently depending on the interpreter’s emphasis. Therefore, the research trend of affiliated historians is to check for its historical value. Since they consider *Hwandangogi* a forged book, they treat *Cheonbugyeong*, a book also found in *Hwandangogi* and *Taebaekilsa*, as a forged book. For this reason, any research on *Cheonbugyeong* is considered unacceptable since it must be understood within the context of forged books. The goal of their research is to prevent *Cheonbugyeong* from escaping from the category of forgery.

The research trend conducted on *Cheonbugyeong* by non-affiliated historians is twofold. First, they have focused their research on the interpretation of *Cheonbugyeong* and second, they have refuted the affiliated historians’ forgery claims by utilizing documents from reliable sources. The books most often used to refute the forgery claim are *Hwandangogi*, *Gounseonsaengmunjip*,

Namsagobigyeol, *Gyeokkamrok*, a letter sent by Gye Yeonsu to Daejonggyo in 1917, *Budoji*, and *Singyochongseo*. Although these sources are often criticized by the affiliated historians, the non-affiliated historians make the counterargument that the affiliated historians are adhering to a strict colonial view of history or an evidential viewpoint. But the non-affiliated historians have not officially confronted the forgery claims in their research papers.

The research trend of *Cheonbugyeong* by religious circles explains the book from various angles, but does not examine the book's historical authenticity. Since Daejonggyo considers *Cheonbugyeong* a scripture, it is not an independent research field. Since *Cheonbugyeong* is an explanatory book of 81 characters containing the principle of the creation of the universe by Dangun, Daejonggyo either introduces the content to the public or inserts *Cheonbugyeong* into its ritual system. Since *Cheonbugyeong* is an important scripture, the religious circles' interest in it is higher than historians. Instead of verifying the book's historical authenticity, the religious circles merely explain the text.

The Ideological Meaning of *Cheonbugyeong*

In order to delve the ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong*, a philological examination should first be completed. So far a thorough philology has not been performed allowing *Cheonbugyeong* to be interpreted differently depending on the interpreter's intention, level of knowledge and thought, and interpretive view. The purpose of this paper is not to solve these issues but to simply look at how non-affiliated historians and religious circles interpret the concept of *il* (—) and *mu* (無) in regard to *Cheonbugyeong*. Then, based on this, this paper will explain how non-affiliated historians and religious circles comprehend the ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong*. The following passage is the entire 81 characters of *Cheonbugyeong*.

The start of a beginning is the same as not having a beginning. Although the Three Great Ultimates of Heaven, earth, and man are divided into Heaven, earth, and man, the essence of the Three Great Ultimates is not exhausted but exists in its original form. Heaven is 1 because it comes into existence by itself, earth is 2 because it exists for the first time due to the existence of Heaven as the first beginning, man is 3 because man's

beginning presupposes the existence of Heaven and earth. Even when one accumulates and becomes larger to form 10, a number which represents everything, the principle of the three elements, i.e., the Three Great Ultimates, manifests itself without limit or end. Heaven is the 2 and 3, the numbers of yin and yang, the earth is 2 and 3, the numbers of yin and yang, and man is also 2 and 3, the numbers of yin and yang. Heaven, earth, and man all follow the rules of yin and yang. The sum of the numbers of the Three Great Ultimates is 6; the sum of the numbers of Heaven, earth, and man is 6, to which is added the unique numbers of 1, 2, and 3 assigned to Heaven, earth, and man to come up with numbers 7, 8, and 9. When the principle of the Three Great Ultimates, represented by 3, is in motion, 4 is created, and this 4 surrounds 5 and 6. The mysteriousness of Heaven, earth, and man moves without end or limitations. Oh, the things and phenomena in the world come and go! The usage of the Three Great Ultimates may change but its essence does not change. The original mind shines brightly as if following the sun; thus Heaven and earth are one to man. The end is the same as not having an end.⁵

As confirmed from the above quote, *Cheonbugyeong* starts with *ilsimusil* (一始無始一) and ends with *iljongmujongil* (一終無終一). Interpreters agonize over the concept of *il* and *mu*. The interpretation of *il* and *mu* is a matter of great importance because the ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong* will be different depending on how this is conceptualized or how it is interpreted. There are three major interpretations of *il* and *mu*. First, *il* and *mu* are the basic principles of creation of the universe. Second, *il* is a basic principle of creation of the universe and less weight is placed upon *mu*. Third, *mu* is considered a basic principle of the creation of the universe and *il* is the starting point of the creation of the universe. In the first case, *il* and *mu* are each interpreted as a “starting one” and “ending one.” In the second case, *il* is interpreted as “one without a beginning” and “one without an end.” In the third case, *mu* is interpreted as “an emptiness that makes one to begin and end.” In the first and third cases, some point out that *il* becomes a relative concept. Differences between the three interpretations may

5. This translation of *Cheonbugyeong* is the author's own: 一始無始一 析三極無盡本 天一一地一 二人一三 一積十鉅 無匱化三 天二三 地二三 人二三 大三合六 生七八九 運三四 成環五七 一妙衍 萬往萬來 用變不動本 本心本太陽 昂明 人中天地一 一終無終一。

arise depending on the context and intention of the interpretations. The three interpretations presuppose three different contexts, and because of that, the ideological meanings are different.

1. In the case of Daejonggyo

Daejonggyo officially adheres to the second interpretation of *ilsimusiil* and *iljongmujongil* as meaning that which “began from one but one without a beginning” and “ended with one but one without an end.” According to Daejonggyoyogam, *ilsimusiil* and *iljongmujongil* are interpreted as “one, the number of origin, is an origin of the universe and no others are ahead of one” and “one becomes an end when returned to the origin and one cannot end beyond one.” Here, one, in relation to the creation of the universe, is a number symbolizing “beginning for the first time” or “the origin of the universe.”

The importance of *il* in Daejonggyo is related to the doctrine of *samsinilche* (三神一體) and *samjingwiil* (三眞歸一). *Samjingwiil* is expressed as “*hannim* who is a *segeom hanmom*” (Daejonggyo Chongbonsa 1997: 339-43). Hwanin-Hwanung-Dangun are three gods functioning as *Johwa-Gyohwa-Chihwa* but their bodies are consequently one. *Samjingwiil* means *samjin* or human beings are born to return to *hana* (一). Daejonggyo believes that human beings have a *sammang* (三妄) of mind(心), energy(氣), body(身), and *samjin* (三眞) of nature(性), life(命), spirit(精), and through this relationship, three ways of feeling(感), breathing(息), sensing(觸) are being formed. Since three ways are divided into six levels, a human being has a total of 18 levels. Common people face the sufferings of *saengrobyeongsa* (生老病死) by going into the 18 levels of 3 ways recklessly but considerate people who reach *samjin* can retrieve *sammang* by ceasing feelings, breathing evenly, and banning bumpings. Returning from *sammang* to *samjin* is called *banmangjeukjin* (返妄卽眞). After *banmangjeukjin* a considerate person returns to *samjin* and finally to *haneol* (一). Daejonggyo considers these processes as the embodiment of the ideology of *hongikingan* (弘益人間) and simultaneously, are building a *jisangcheongung* (地上天宮) by stacking *gongdeok* (功德) of *seongtonggongwan* (性通功完). Not only does Daejonggyo regard *Cheonbugyeong* as the principle of the universe’s creation but also the mental attitude of a human being and the whole image that the human being should pursue. *Cheonbugyeong* is interpreted within these contexts by Daejonggyo.

<Regarding Han>

The Dangun hanbaegum says:

Chapter 1: Han is the start but there is no start of Han.

Chapter 2: Han divides into three roads but it is the origin of all things.

Chapter 3: The three roads are heaven, earth and human.

Chapter 4: Heaven is the first division of han, earth is the second division of han and human is the third division of han.

Chapter 5: Han times ten harmonizes three, heaven, earth and human have their own pairs.

Chapter 6: Three roads harmonize six. They start seven, eight and nine. They move three and four. They finish five and ten.

Chapter 7: Han is changing all the time but is the origin without moving.

Chapter 8: Han is the end but there is no end of han.

(Kang Su-won 1986: 263-5)

The above citation confirms the interpretation of *Cheonbugyeong* by Daejonggyo as placing Hwanin-Hwanung-Dangun as gods of functional *samsinilche* in the context of Johwa-Gyohwa-Chihwa, the principle of the creation of the universe by Dangun, a *Chihwaju*, and of the human mind belonging to heaven originally where Hwanin-Hwanung-Dangun resides. In *Cheonbugyeong il* symbolizes the *samsinilche* of Hwanin-Hwanung-Dangun and their world. Human beings are the existence that must complete *seongtonggongwan* to go forward in the world and *seongtonggongwan* is related to the ideology of *hongikingan*, “to make human beings widely beneficial.” Thus *Cheonbugyeong* is not only a scripture that explains the principle of the creation of the universe in Daejonggyo but it is also a scripture that dreams about a reform of the human mind, and more over, even dreams about social reform through *hongikingan* ideology along with the doctrine of *samjingwiil*.

2. In the Case of non-affiliated historians

Non-affiliated historians do not gravitate to one particular interpretation of *il* and *mu*. They not only accept the three different interpretations of *il* and *mu* but also attempt to formulate divergent interpretations as well. New interpretations of *Cheonbugyeong* are being developed by these historians based upon the place

and knowledge level of the interpreters.

The first interpretation of *il* and *mu* is supported by Choe Uibok, Gim Jungtae, and Lee Jin-jin. Generally scholars who accept the first interpretation use various humanistic interpretations of *Cheonbugyeong*. In Lee Jin-jin's interpretation he places human beings at the center of the interpretation and reveals other humanistic interpretations.

The second interpretation, *mu* meaning "no existence" and placing *il* at the position of ultimate existence, is utilized by Mun Jae-hyeon, Song Ho-su, Im Seungguk, Lee Seong-jae, Hanmunhwawon Chulpanbu, Han Gyuseong, Choe Seokgi, and Jo Yeongmu. Lee Seong-jae puts *taegeuk* (太極) in the same category as *il* and Jo Yeongmu interprets *il* as *giun* (氣運) of *ilwonjigi* (一元之氣) and *mu* as *mugeukheogongche* (無極虛空體).

The third interpretation sets *il* as its starting point while placing *mu* at the position of an ultimate existence. Scholars interpreting the context this way are Gwon Tae-hun, and Park Yong-suk.

The one started from nothing, then the one was divided into three, finally nothing could be the origin. Origin is the brightness of the sun. Human, heaven and the earth are the one. (Gwon Tae-hun 1999)

The start of the one is started from nothing. It grows up three then becomes the origin. The one is the end. The end of the one becomes nothing again. (Park Yong-suk 1985)

Finally, there are several unique interpretations by non-affiliated historians. Scholars such as Je Sangjae, Jeon Byeonghun, Kim Yeong-ui, and I Gyeongsuk have formulated new interpretations of *il* and *mu*. Je Sangjae from *Cheonbugyeong Jipju* interprets *ilsi* (一始) as the *sidong* (始動) of *ilgi* (一氣) and *mu* as 'non existence' by inserting it between *ilsimusi* and *il*. Jeon Byeonghun from Hanbaedal interpreted *musi* as *mugeuk* and *taegeuk* by comprehending *il* as *cheonji* (天地). Kim Yeong-ui from *Cheonbugyeongui bimilgwa baekdusan-jok munhwa* puts "one" in the same category as do from Confucius, Buddha, and Laozi. Lee Gyeongsuk from *Maemui yeohaeng* interprets *il* as *haneul* (天).

The reason for focusing on the interpretation of *il* and *mu* is because the ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong* changes depending on the conceptualization of *il* and *mu*. These three interpretations contain common points about the location of ultimate existence but differ on the place for human beings. Although

Daejonggyo places the position of the ultimate existence separately, its ideological meaning allows the possibility for the reform of human minds and social reform. Non-affiliated historians generally do not link the ultimate existence's position to changes of human minds and social reform. Therefore, they mostly remain silent on this issue. They only create the meaning of *Cheonbugyeong* so they can closely examine the principle of the universe. Hence, the *Cheonbugyeong* interpretation by Lee Jin-jin who used a humanistic interpretation is considered unique among non-affiliated historians.

Conclusion

The philology of *Cheonbugyeong* focused on the establishment background and circulatory circumstances. This paper then looked at the historical studies and research trends of *Cheonbugyeong* by affiliated historians, non-affiliated historians, and religious circles. Finally we looked at how religious circles and non-affiliated historians determine the ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong* based upon the concept of *il* and *mu*.

It is not easy to write a research paper on *Cheonbugyeong* since so little historical research and writing has been done solely on *Cheonbugyeong*. Nonetheless in our society, many books on *Cheonbugyeong* are being published every year, and the public has a great deal of interest in these books. Even if this article is just a brief sketch, we need to analyze the phenomena about *Cheonbugyeong*. Interpretations of *Cheonbugyeong* vary tremendously depending on the interpreter. The text is considered a deep and abstruse script. In this paper I merely translate the original into English and do not attempt to interpret the meaning of *Cheonbugyeong*.

The majority of this paper focused on how scholars extracted the ideological meanings of *Cheonbugyeong* and how they came to their conclusions. Affiliated historians do not believe that there is an ideological meaning to *Cheonbugyeong* because they consider it a forged book.

Research about the ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong* is only being done by Daejonggyo and non-affiliated historians. Because of public interest in *Cheonbugyeong*, we need to pay special attention to the socio-cultural influences of *Cheonbugyeong* so that they do not vanish but continue to grow. The interpretative works of *Cheonbugyeong* by non-affiliated historians are a sort of 'myth creation.' They pursue the ideology that the principle of harmony of the

universe was understood in the era of Dangun, as an ideal world or mythical world. These people sometimes attempt to prove the existence of *gukjo* Dangun and its mythical world using *Cheonbugyeong*. We cannot simply consider the works by non-affiliated historians as absurd.

Although Daejonggyo inserted *Cheonbugyeong* into its scriptures long after it was established, *Cheonbugyeong* is allocated an important position as a *Johwageong*. The scripture contains the principle of the creation of the universe by Hwanin and was passed down to the people through Dangun. Since Hwanin is considered an equal to Dangun according to *samsinilche*, *Cheonbugyeong* is directly related to Dangun. Therefore, *Cheonbugyeong* is very important to believers of Daejonggyo who consider Dangun as a person to admire. Moreover, *Cheonbugyeong* makes the believers of Daejonggyo dream of the changes in human minds and social reform along with the doctrine of *samsinilche* and *samjingwiil*. Not only that but by inserting the process of memorizing *Cheonbugyeong* into its ritual system, Daejonggyo continuously makes its followers remember the existence of *Cheonbugyeong* and solidify the memories of Dangun and the ethnos as well. Daejonggyo also believes that *Cheonbugyeong* works as a bridge between people and god.

My interpretation of *Cheonbugyeong* has focused on the concept of *il* and *mu* but many other interpretations are possible depending on the interpretations. For example, the ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong* could be found on explaining the principle of creation of the universe and circulation after premising the outlook on the time of circulation. A humanistic meaning can be found in *Cheonbugyeong* like in the case of Lee Jin-jin and the ideological meaning to criticize society. Also, the ideological meaning in relation to the Book of Changes could be brought out.

It is important to examine the context and intention of interpretations being conducted and how these interpretations are affecting the socio-cultural environment. When we look for the ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong*, it is not a matter of genuineness that we need to pay special attention to, but instead, what we need to look at is how the ideological meaning of *Cheonbugyeong* is being made at this very moment, how diverse are the meanings, and the amount of epistemological pervasive effect. With all these issues in mind, I have one comment to make. If one is to pursue *Cheonbugyeong* these days, one must keep in mind that we are living in modern times. If one introduces a new ideological meaning based upon one's interpretation of *Cheonbugyeong*, one must base the interpretation on modern humanism as well as other interpretations. Since we

are living in a modern world, we must accept modernity. In this context, the interpretations of *Cheonbugyeong* by Daejonggyo and Lee Jin-jin show a great deal of possibility to be understood on the level of modern humanism.

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