

Mt. Paektu and *Sōndo*
(仙道 the way of immortality)
in Contemporary South Korea:
The Case of GiCheon (氣天)¹

Victoria Ten (Leiden University)

Abstract

This paper analyzes the symbolic role of Mt. Paektu in contemporary South Korea. It examines the relationship and interaction between three newly invented South Korean traditions, and the mechanisms of their function, through the study of their legends. The first constructed tradition is contemporary Mt. Paektu culture and the second is *sōndo* (仙道 the way of immortality). In South Korea today, references to cults of mountain worship go under the name of *sōndo*. It can be argued that *sōndo* is a newly invented tradition, though based on ancient cults. Alternatively, *sōndo* can be defined as a newly invented name for an already existing cultural and historical phenomenon. The third invented tradition is GiCheon (氣天 *Kich'ŏn*), one of South Korean *ki suryŏn* (氣修煉 training related to *ki* – life energy) practices re-invented in modernity on the basis of ancient Asian traditions, similar to Chinese *qigong* and Indian yoga. I argue that Mt. Paektu culture, *ki suryŏn*, and *sōndo* are contemporary manifestations of ancient Korean cults of mountain worship. Three legends that I explore relate equally to Paektu, GiCheon and immortality, thus constituting a kind of a metaphoric crossroads where these newly invented traditions meet.

Keywords: Mt. Paektu, *sōndo*, immortality, GiCheon, *ki suryŏn*, Korea, mountains, mountain worship, invented tradition, legends

Introduction

This paper examines the relationship and interaction between three newly-invented South Korean traditions, and the mechanisms of their function, through the study of their legends. The concept “invented tradition” originates in the famous *The Invention of Tradition* by E. J. Hobsbawm and T. O. Ranger. However, application of this concept to Mt. Paektu is a new phenomenon in academia. An important contribution in studying Mt. Paektu as invented tradition has been made by Pak Kyeri, cited later, who examined Mt. Paektu in contemporary North Korean art. Nianshen Song studied Mt. Paektu as an imagined territory in the fields of cartography and geography. Various South and North Korean scholars continue to contribute to the creation of Mt. Paektu as an invented tradition, but also comment critically on this process, as I relate in detail below, in the subsection, “Mt. Paektu as Living Tradition.” These scholars are often historians and geographers who utilize interdisciplinary methods. My own approach is also interdisciplinary, drawing on the subjects of history, art, folklore, and contemporary culture.

Analyzing Mt. Paektu as an invented tradition in history, geography, and art is essential for understanding contemporary Korean society. Yet, these types of study alone are in danger of missing the dynamic, interactive element connecting Mt. Paektu and mountains in general to collective conscious and contemporary practices. What is Mt. Paektu? What does it stand for, and why is it so important? In order to answer these questions, I review Mt. Paektu in its relationship with a number of additional invented traditions of contemporary Korea, attempting to understand these new phenomena in the context of the ancient East Asian culture of immortality.

This paper will examine the constructed tradition of GiCheon (氣天 *Kich'ŏn*), one of the *ki suryŏn* (氣修練 training related to *ki* – life energy) practices re-invented in modernity on the basis of ancient Asian traditions, similar to Chinese *qigong* and Indian yoga. *Sŏndo suryŏn* (仙道修練 learning the way of immortality) is another name of *ki suryŏn* used by proponents of *sŏndo*. I argue that Mt. Paektu culture, *ki suryŏn*, and *sŏndo* are contemporary manifestations of ancient Korean cults of mountain worship. Three legends that I explore relate equally to Paektu,

GiCheon and immortality, thus constituting a kind of a metaphoric crossroads at which newly invented traditions meet.

As a set of exercises intended to transform the body and mind-heart, GiCheon belongs to a group of practices which have been characterized as internal alchemy (內丹 *naedan*) and nourishing life (養生 *yangsaeng*).² In my research, I use a series of interviews conducted with sixty-one GiCheon practitioners between September 2010 and April 2011 in South Korea. Additionally, as a scholar-practitioner myself, I draw upon my personal experience as a GiCheon adept and an instructor, and the knowledge I have acquired over seventeen years of involvement. I also make use of GiCheon books, texts, DVDs, written and oral legends.

This paper introduces *ki suryōn* as an invented tradition. I compare it to similar phenomena in China, which is important for demonstrating that *ki suryōn* does not exist in a vacuum but is a part of a larger contemporary tradition in East Asia. Then this paper proceeds to clarify the relationship between *ki suryōn* and *sōndo* culture. I briefly introduce the phenomenon of *sōndo* culture itself and its relation to *chaeya sahak* (在野史學 oppositional history). Then I make a few points about the culture of immortality and alchemy in East Asia in order to show how the contemporary traditions examined in this paper connect to their ancient roots. I proceed to discuss Mt. Paektu as a living tradition of both North and South Korea. The final section of this paper analyzes the legends behind the subject of this paper, demonstrating how they serve as vehicles of nationalism by drawing on the cultural capital of Mt. Paektu and simultaneously increasing this capital. As part of GiCheon philosophy, the legends also promote the values of self-transformation and self-sacrifice, confirming and encouraging the practice of contemporary GiCheon adepts. The transformative character of the legends set against the background of the sacred Mt. Paektu confirms the place of *ki suryōn* in general and GiCheon in particular within the broader culture of inner alchemy in East Asia.

***Ki Suryōn* in Korea and *Yangsheng* in China**

East Asian practices of internal alchemy and nourishing life related

to *ki* (氣, life energy) date back to ancient times. These techniques³ are grounded in physiological, psychological and behavioural principles and include gymnastics, massage, breathing, sexual hygiene, diet, healing, meditation and visualization, as well as rules of daily behavior.⁴ Today these practices have acquired new forms, such as *ki suryŏn* in Korea and *yangsheng* in China. The legends studied in the present paper come from GiCheon, part of the greater *ki suryŏn* cultural phenomenon.

In 1980s Korea, rapid industrial growth led to rising concerns with personal health and self-improvement. According to Foucault, practices of self-reflection, self-improvement and self-discovery are utilized as strategies of living in the world by people with more extensive life choices than the working class.⁵ Nowadays, this middle class trend to “better” living connects with the pursuit of “nature,” a notion invented and constructed to counterpoise pollution and urbanization.

Mountain trips and hiking have always been popular in Korea. The hiking boom of the 1980s coincides in time with the rise of leisure culture, *sŏngin undong* (成人運動 sports for adults) and *ki suryŏn*. The popularity of these activities was made possible by the thriving economy of the 1980s, which contributed to the development of a middle class with sufficient means to fund self-perfection in the industrial setting.⁶ *Ki suryŏn* groups rely on the mountain culture of Korea conceptually and practically. The terminology of *ki suryŏn* groups draws on the traditions of mountain immortality,⁷ and they often organize practical retreats at centers in the mountains.

But what is *ki suryŏn*, more precisely? U Hyeran defines it as a *ki*-based practice directed toward the moral and physical development of a person. In the estimation of U Hyeran, *ki suryŏn* has spread beyond particular *ki suryŏn* groups, becoming a cultural product accessible to the majority of the population. As part of popular culture, the cosmology and values of *ki suryŏn* are interiorized by contemporary South Korean society, through internet computer games, animation and films, among other things.⁸ Various *ki suryŏn* organizations co-exist with Chinese forms of self-cultivation usually referred to as *qigong* (氣功) and Indian yoga.

The Chinese parallels of contemporary Korean *ki suryŏn* are *qigong* and *taijiquan* (太極拳). These and other practices such as folk

dance, walking, mountain climbing, badminton, choral singing, water calligraphy, poetic writing, and keeping pets are the subject of a study by Judith Farquhar and Qicheng Zhang. These practices are referred to by contemporary residents of Beijing as life-nurturing activities (養生 Chinese *yangsheng*). Farquhar and Zhang joined in such life-nurturing activities in Beijing between the years 2002 and 2004, and conducted interviews with other practitioners.⁹ The ideas of these Chinese practitioners resonate with the ancient East Asian approaches to life as constant generation and regeneration at every level of reality, including its ecological, social, physiological, and psychological dimensions. In this worldview, culture is the refinement of natural resources, not an entity separate from nature. The perseverant crafting of life by man is a part of a larger cosmological process of life-unfolding, formulated in the *Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor* (黃帝內經 *Huangdi Neijing*) as “heaven and earth mingle their qi [*ki*], limit its span, and call it man.”¹⁰ Farquhar and Zhang find that this traditional view on life as a process of unceasing genesis and transformation is vibrantly alive in contemporary East Asia.¹¹

Farquhar and Zhang define *yangsheng* as a contemporary invented tradition, the forms of which arise within urban conditions. Nevertheless, this living tradition manifests continuity with ancient East Asian ways of life and thought articulated in the *Book of Changes*, *The Inner Canon of the Yellow Emperor* (黃帝內經 *Huangdi Neijing*), *Dao De Jing* (道德經) and the *Analects of Confucius* (論語 *Lunyu*). *Yangsheng* as witnessed in today’s Beijing is an expression, embodiment, and re-creation of these writings.

Yangsheng is more than individual self-cultivation. For many practitioners it is also a form of contribution to the life of the community, the city, the nation and even humankind as a whole. Older *yangsheng* practitioners quote Mao Zedong’s slogans, “Serve the people” and “Great public with no private.”¹²

In the spirit of Farquhar and Zhang’s work, the present paper approaches Korean *ki suryōn* as a contemporary urban phenomenon that draws upon old East Asian traditions of self-cultivation. If *yangsheng* is a newly invented East Asian tradition of nourishing life, then Korean *ki suryōn* is a part of this tradition. GiCheon practitioners I interviewed

articulate their aspirations toward self-perfection as embracing their family, community, and sometimes even nation and humankind, and they practice GiCheon in seeking to do so. They yearn for, and at times succeed in, achieving greater harmony with themselves and nature. Many *ki suryŏn* groups locate their origin in mythic times, linking their legacy with East Asian beliefs in divine immortals (神仙 *sinsŏn*, Chinese *shenxian*), Korean mountain cults, and Tan'gun, the legendary father of the Korean nation.

***Sŏndo* Culture and *Chaeya Sahak* in Contemporary Korea**

How do the notions of immortality in *ki suryŏn* relate to nationalistic discourse in contemporary Korea, and Korean mountain cults? First I introduce the concepts of *sansin* (山神 mountain gods) and *sinsŏn*. The cult of *sansin* worship has existed in Korea since ancient times. The Chinese concepts of immortals (神仙 *sinsŏn*) were connected to the notions of Korean *sansin* in the Three Kingdoms period, when Daoism came to Korea from China. Today the depictions of male and female *sansin* and *sinsŏn* are found in shrines dedicated to mountain gods located in Buddhist temple complexes, usually called *sansingak* (山神閣), or *samsŏnggak* (三聖閣).¹³ They are also worshiped in separate shrines called *sansindang* (山神堂), which are not parts of Buddhist temples.¹⁴

Despite the fact that *sansin* and *sinsŏn* sometimes coexist and merge, as in Buddhist pictorial arts and in other cultural spaces such as *sŏndo* culture and the GiCheon legends discussed below, they are parts of different belief systems. The cult of *sansin* is widespread in Korea. *Sansin* are included in the shamanic pantheon of gods and spirits, and Korean shamans hold for them special ceremonies. While *sansin* tradition is deeply rooted in Korean folk culture, the *sinsŏn* tradition, usually identified as Daoist, was mostly favoured by upper classes, particularly during its introduction in Paekche and Silla. In Koryŏ and Chosŏn, *sinsŏn* culture became gradually popularized, manifesting in the nineteenth century in such new religions as Ch'ŏndogyo.¹⁵

The Chinese character *sŏn* (仙 Chinese *xian*, immortality, immortals) is traditionally associated with East Asian Daoism. Yet, in contemporary South Korea, the character *sŏn* has acquired a new nationalistic meaning.

In modern times, references to old Korean cults of mountain worship have emerged under the name of *sōndo* (仙道 the way of immortality). *Sōndo* constitutes a merge of *sansin* and *sinsŏn* cultures, a merge embodied, for example, in the figure of Tan'gun. Contemporary *sōndo* writings posit Tan'gun as central to *sōndo*, despite the fact that the *locus classicus*, the *Samguk Yusa* (三國遺事 Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) calls him *sansin*, and not a *sinsŏn*.¹⁶

Sōndo culture has grown and developed since the 1980s, and it is postulated as an ancient and original Korean religion. New books on *sōndo* are continuously published in South Korea: for example *Han'guk sōndo wa hyōndae tanhak* (Korean *sōndo* and contemporary *tanhak*) by Yi Sūnggho, published in 2015, or *Han'guk sōndo ūi yōksa wa munhwa* (History and culture of Korean *sōndo*) by Sondŏ munhwa yōnguwŏn (Research institute of *sōndo* culture), published in 2006. They perpetuate and develop ideas of *sŏn* and *sinsŏn*, supporting their presence in the public consciousness. Proponents of *sōndo* view *ki suryŏn* as one manifestation of *sōndo*, and they usually refer to it as *sōndo suryŏn* (仙道修練 learning the way of immortality).¹⁷ The importance of Tan'gun and notions of immortality in GiCheon should be understood in the context of this *sōndo* culture.

Korean mountain worship is indeed ancient. Therefore *sōndo* might be defined as a newly-coined name for an already-existing cultural and historical phenomenon. Alternatively, it can be argued that *sōndo* is a newly invented tradition, growing out of ancient cults but taken up and developed in modernity. In its contemporary nationalistic meaning, *sōndo* is a relatively new term. But the proponents of *sōndo* in South Korea today project it backwards to Silla, Koguryŏ and Paekche.¹⁸ They also view new Korean religions originating in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, such as Ch'ōndogyo, Chūngsan'gyo and Wŏn Buddhism, as expressions of *sōndo*.¹⁹

When discussing the history of *sōndo* as a term, its propagators point out its connection to what the historians Sin Ch'aeho (申采浩 1880-1936), Chŏng Inbo (鄭寅普 1893-1950) and An Chaehong (安在鴻 1891-1965) called *sŏn'gyŏ* (仙教 the teaching of immortality). Hyŏn Sangyun (玄相允 1893-?) called it *sindo* (神道 the way of spirits), Yi Nūnghwa (李能和 1869-

1943) called it *sin'gyo* (神教 the teaching of spirits), and Ch'oe Namsŏn (崔南善 1890-1957) called it *kosindo* (古神道 the old way of spirits).²⁰

Sŏndo culture has a direct connection to the cultural and social phenomenon of *chaeya sahak* (在野史學 oppositional history). The views of *chaeya sahak* are widely spread by its defenders, populist nationalist historians, and are accepted by many citizens of South Korea. *Chaeya* historians propagate and perpetuate a different interpretation of Tan'gun, which came up early in the twentieth century, when Tan'gun was redefined as the ancestor of the Korean people rather than the founder of the first Korean state. The conflict between the advocates of *chaeya sahak*, who were at the time outside academia, and the defenders of *kangdan sahak* (講壇史學 academic history), professional historians, escalated in the 1978, around the subject of depicting Tan'gun and Kojosŏn (古朝鮮) in children's history books for school. The proponents of *chaeya sahak* accused *kangdan sahak* scholars of promoting a colonial view of Korean history, instilled by Japanese scholars during the occupation. *Kangdan sahak* scholars called *chaeya sahak* followers non-professional and accused them of falsifying historical records. The main points of disagreements between the two groups relate to Tan'gun, the sphere of his actions in historical/mythological time and geographical space, and the reliability of various sources related to his personage. *Chaeya sahak* sees Tan'gun as a real historical figure while academic historians regard him as a mythological figure.²¹

Some contemporary scholars appreciate *chaeya sahak* as a new mythology that attempts to strengthen Korean national identity. Kang Tongu sees history and mythology as two sides of the same coin. He notes that in recent decades, the conflict between *chaeya sahak* and *kangdan sahak* has lost some of its acuteness. Some claims of *chaeya sahak* were incorporated into the official version of Korean history, such as in contemporary history textbooks for schoolchildren.²² *Chaeya sahak* has been equally popularised through *sŏndo* culture and *ki suryŏn*.

GiCheon Practice

GiCheon is a representative example of *ki suryŏn* directed at achieving

immortality through self-perfection. The vocabulary that the GiCheon practitioners use in their interviews situates GiCheon within the East Asian tradition of inner alchemy and nourishing life. I will presently outline how GiCheon techniques are utilized for the transformation of the body and mind of an adept.



Image 1. Copyright Sangmuwŏn, reproduced with permission.

GiCheon dynamic positions, including martial and sword arts, arise from six static basic positions called *yukhap tan'gong* (六合丹功). *Yukhap* (六合) means “six positions unified.” *Tan'gong* means “cinnabar [field] practices” or “strengthening cinnabar [field].” *Tan* (丹 Chinese: *dan*, cinnabar) is an important element in East Asian alchemy. In the inner alchemy of the human body, it is usually mentioned in the context of “cinnabar fields.” The upper cinnabar field is located in the forehead, the middle—in the chest, while the lower and the most important one—in the lower abdomen. Though the Sino-Korean word *tanjŏn* (丹田 Chinese *dantian*) could refer to any of the three cinnabar fields, GiCheon practitioners mostly use it as indicating the lower cinnabar field. *Tan'gong* (丹功) in GiCheon and other contemporary East Asian practices is understood as the strengthening of the lower cinnabar field, and accumulating more *naegong* (內功 inner power) there. *Naegong* is believed to develop the moral maturity of the person, clear vision and judgment. *Yukhap tan'gong* are believed to heal the body and mind, and improve *ki* circulation.

Of the six basic positions, *naegasinjang* (內家神掌) is the first, and it is the heart of the practice, believed to suffice for achievement of perfect health, immortality and final enlightenment. *Naegasinjang* is performed as follows: the legs are spread shoulder-length, the ankles are turned outward, the knees are bent down and inward, the back is arched, the buttocks are pushed out, the shoulders are pulled back, the arms are stretched out in the front above shoulder-height and finally the palms are pressed outward (see image 1). In *naegasinjang*, the backbone is stretched

from the neck to the coccyx, while the weight is directed downwards, toward the ground.

This position is described as a perfect application of *yökkün*, the principle of the maximal bending of the joints. Joints in GiCheon are believed to be passages, or gateways (門 *mun*), through which *ki* flows. Maximal bending of the joints in *yökkün* opens the passages to allow the flow of *ki*.

The other central posture in GiCheon is *tanbaegong*, a bow, which involves bending the main joints of the body: knees, waist, elbows and wrists. In Chinese characters it is sometimes spelled as 丹拜功, where *tan* (丹) is cinnabar, *pae* (拜) is to bow, and *kong* (功) is power. This spelling stresses the function of the exercise as gaining inner power and storing it in the lower cinnabar field, the abdomen. 檀拜功 is an alternative spelling, where *tan* (檀) indicates Tan'gun, the legendary founder of Korean nation. My GiCheon teachers speculated that this type of ritual bow was performed in front of Tan'gun, and the term *tan'gun* could be interpreted as a title given to ancient Korean chiefs. This interpretation connects to nationalist views in GiCheon, projecting this practice back in time toward the legendary Korean past.²³ As already mentioned, GiCheon is not alone in its nationalist views of Tan'gun and immortality, but forms a part of contemporary *sōndo* culture. As re-invented traditions, *sōndo* culture, *ki suryōn*, and GiCheon are contemporary phenomena. Yet, they draw on enormous reservoirs of ancient East Asian culture centering on the idea of immortality.

East Asian Culture of Alchemy and Immortality

Motifs of immortality and never-ending transmutation of life in East Asian culture go as far back in history as the culture itself. Early descriptions of the immortals (仙 Korean *sōn*, Chinese *xian*) are found in the *Shiji* (史記 Records of the Historian), produced around the first century BC. Early immortals were sometimes depicted as clothed in feathers, with the ability to ascend to heaven by moving their arms as wings.

Shifting and transmuting images of the *sansin* and *sinson* of Korea

and their commemoration speak to the East Asian culture of alchemy. The purpose of alchemy is the achievement of immortality, which is considered possible after grasping the principles of life's origin and transformation. If the declared endeavor of external alchemy is the creation of an elixir that turns any metal into gold and gives eternal life, internal alchemy achieves perfection and immortality through transformative processes in the body and mind of the adept. In practice, external and internal alchemy often intersect and merge.

Ge Hong (283-343), an early Daoist thinker, discussed the art of immortality in his famous work *Baopuzi* (抱朴子 Book of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity), dedicated to internal and external alchemy. As he describes in his *Baopuzi*, meditation and purification have to be carried out before preparing the elixir. After the elixir is ready, gold is used to verify its perfection. The elixir is proved to be effective when it can transform metals into gold. The perfected elixir that can turn metals into gold is ready to be absorbed by the adept and turn the human into an immortal.²⁴ Meditation and purification before the preparation of the elixir pertain to internal alchemy, while the process of testing the elixir on metals can be classified as external alchemy. Formulated this way, the process of preparation and absorption of the elixir of immortality manifests both internal and external alchemical processes, and the boundary between them is not clearly set.

The Chinese character for cinnabar (丹 *dan*, Korean *tan*) means "red color." *Dan* became a generic term for an elixir of immortality.²⁵ *Dan* forms a part of a word "cinnabar field," a term in internal alchemy which indicates three *dantian* (丹田 Korean *tanjŏn*), the three bodily loci which play a key role in East Asian practices of internal alchemy and nourishing life.²⁶

From an alchemical perspective, reality itself is a chain of transformations. Alchemists attempt to discern the generative and productive principles of nature and create effects in their laboratories by employing the powers that inhere in nature. In internal alchemy, the mind and body of the alchemist is just such a laboratory. Processes that occur in nature—the macrocosm—alchemists try to imitate in the laboratory—their microcosm—gaining and developing their knowledge

of nature by replication.

The work of achieving immortality is based on imitation of nature. Nature in the East Asian context is often understood as a mountain. The character *sōn* (山 immortality) consists of two elements, *in* (人 Chinese *ren*, human being) and *san* (山 Chinese *shan*, mountain), underscoring the direct connection between immortality and mountains in East Asian culture. Ge Hong stresses the importance of carrying out alchemic work in the vicinity of great mountains.²⁷ Contact with a mountain is essential in internal and external alchemy. In the mountains immortals dwell, and to sacred mountains adepts of immortality withdraw. It is there that they seek herbs, minerals, and mushrooms instrumental to alchemical processes. In internal alchemy a human body is often visualized in the form of a mountain.²⁸ In East Asian painting, a mountain is depicted as a “second self” of the adept, and processes and phenomena occur in a mountain that parallel those taking place in a human body. In this way, painted images of a mountain, and subsequently the mountain itself, perceived and experienced by an adept following certain cultural “programming,” constitutes a model, or a paradigm, of the alchemic transmutation of the self,²⁹ while the practice of painting becomes an alchemic practice of self-perfection.

Artistic representation is a technique of perfection and refinement developing as a part of a culture of alchemy and immortality. A common alchemic motif in the paintings is a mountain that reminds the viewer of a human body. The first alchemical representation of a human body in a form of a mountain dates to 1227.³⁰ One of the later examples includes a picture *The Fanghu Isle of the Immortals*, Qing dynasty (1644-1911), from the Nelson-Atkin Museum of Art, where three palaces situated one above the other on a mountain can be interpreted as three *dantian* (丹田 Korean *tanjŏn*). A mountain itself recalls the shape of a human body. Mountain paintings often depict people traveling toward a palace in the mountain. This palace can be interpreted as an imperial palace, a palace of mountain immortals, or even the head of a human body. In such a case people moving toward it are a metaphoric depiction of either a stream of *ki* or body fluids circulating through the organism.

Another example of a parallel between the human body and a

mountain is a *Landscape with Buildings*, Ming dynasty, on display at the University of Michigan Museum of Art.³¹ In this painting, the path leading to the palace curves in a manner similar to the intestines in a human body. The movement of people on the mountain, which is symbolic also of the human body, is a complex, multi-layered image. It connotes the movement of liquids and *ki* in the human body, the act of traveling in a mountainous landscape, a pilgrimage to a sacred place, the journey to an imperial palace, and the spiritual progress of a human being toward immortality. Some of these processes occur simultaneously in the paintings and in old or new East Asian legends that are related to the quest for immortality.

The parallel between a human body and a mountain is related to another alchemic model: the elixir is not exposed to sun and heat, but placed underground for maturation. Here the earth is a metaphor for the well, the uterus, and the egg. This mechanism models the development of the embryo and the birth of a new life – conception and reproduction of life as it happens in nature. The genesis of the cosmos represented in the alchemic procedure equals the gestation of a human being.³² A feminine body, within which an embryo develops, becomes a metaphor for the cosmos, for the gestation of life, and for the alchemical process as such.³³ Images of the cave and a mountain have been anchored in the collective unconscious in East Asia since ancient times to the present, and we will now discuss how they manifest in contemporary Korean culture.

Mt. Paektu as a Living Tradition

The article by Pak Ch'angsŭng entitled, "Paektusan ūi 'minjok yōngsan' ūro ūi p'yosanghwa" (Depicting Mt. Paektu as a 'National Sacred Mountain') describes how Mt. Paektu came into its glory today as a national symbol of unification and of Korea. Pak Ch'angsŭng starts his discussion by noting the 2010 South Korean publication, *Paektusan: hyōnjae wa mirae rŭl marhanda* (Mt. Paektu: speaking the present and the future). This book is a kind of landmark in the emergence of Mt. Paektu as a living tradition in the consciousness of South Koreans. Considered an ancestral mountain during the Koryŏ and Chosŏn dynasties, Paektu

began to gain further cultural and political currency in the Korea of the late 18th century.³⁴ In 1908, Korean nationalist historiographer and independence activist Sin Ch'aeho asserted that Mount T'aebaek, depicted in the *Samguk Yusa* (三國遺事 Memorabilia of the Three Kingdoms) as a birthplace of Tan'gun, a legendary founder of the first Korean kingdom, was not Mt. Myohyang, but Mt. Paektu.³⁵ The theory that Mt. T'aebaek, the birthplace of Tan'gun, is actually Mt. Paektu, and not Mt. Myohyang, was very quickly spread by a religious movement, Tan'gunkyo (檀君教 Tan'gun religion), which one year later changed its name to Taejongkyo (大倅教 religion of the Divine Progenitor).³⁶ In the 1920s and 1930s, Korean newspapers started referring to Mt. Paektu as *yǒngsan* (靈山 sacred mountain), reflecting and confirming its soaring significance in popular consciousness. Korean nationalists, including the famous Ch'oe Namsŏn, created and supported this new status of Mt. Paektu in order to strengthen the spirit of the Korean nation in the struggle against the Japanese occupation of Korea. Ch'oe Namsŏn compares Mt. Paektu to father and mother, and describes it as wellspring of East Asian culture in his renowned *Paektusan Kūnch'amgi* (白頭山 觀參 Record on visiting Mt. Paektu) published in 1926 in the newspaper *Donga Ilbo* (East Asia Daily), 89th edition, released the following year as a separate book.³⁷

Following Korea's division in 1948, southerners were no longer able to access the mountain. Since the opening of China in the mid-1980s, South Korean citizens have been again able to visit the Chinese side of Paektu, and the number of visitors from the South increased steadily. In the 1980s, South Korean newspapers started referring to Paektu as the "national sacred mountain" (*uri minjŏk ŭ yǒngsan*).³⁸ Since Paektu is situated on the border between North Korea and China and is reachable now only through China, it thus became represented in popular imagination not just as a place where the Korean nation originated in the distant past, but as a symbol of the present division of Korea, giving at the same time hope for future unification.³⁹

In the 1980s, Mt. Paektu started to become a symbol of revolution in North Korea, and a revolutionary battlefield. In the 1980s, memorial sites were constructed on Mt. Paektu, allegedly commemorating events

from the guerrilla war against Imperial Japan. Pak Kyeri considers Mt. Paektu as a newly invented tradition of North Korean art. At a certain stage, human presence in the visual narrative became unnecessary, and the landscape alone of Mt. Paektu expressed the revolutionary sentiment that it first induced in the viewer.⁴⁰

As a living tradition currently under construction, Mt. Paektu became a space of dialogue and communication between North and South Korea. South Korean scholars follow North Korean accounts of the image of Paektu with great attention, sometimes reflecting on it critically,⁴¹ sometimes raising arguments similar to the Northern view of Paektu. One example is the historical investigation carried out by scholars in South Korea of the image of Paektu as a symbol of the anti-Japanese struggle.⁴² In this way, the contemporary images of Paektu developing on both sides of the North-South divide come to form a single body of a newly-created tradition. The books discussing Paektu currently published in South and North Korea manifest this new tradition. One example is previously mentioned *Paektusan: hyōnje wa mirae rŭl marhanda* ["Mt. Paektu: speaking the present and the future"], published in the South in 2010. Compared with *Yet chidoro pon Paektusan* ["Mt. Paektu seen through the prism of ancient maps"] published in North Korea in 2014, and *Mt. Paektu Sacred to Revolution*, published in Pyongyang in 1989, this South Korean text reveals a similarity of narrative structure with its northern counterparts. Northern and southern texts rely on similar Korean historical sources, such as *Samguk Yusa* and *Samguk Sagi* (三國史記 History of the Three Kingdoms), that connect Mt. Paektu to the origin myth of Tan'gun and trace the significance of the mountain during the Koguryō, Koryō, and Chosŏn periods.⁴³ Both northern and southern sources mention that in 12th century Koryō, the Paektu Mountain God was worshiped and enshrined as number one in the P'al sōngdang (八聖堂 Shrine for Eight Saints).⁴⁴ The books *Paektusan: hyōnje wa mirae rŭl marhanda*, published in the South, and *Mt. Paektu Sacred to Revolution*, published in the North, abound with picturesque views of Paektu's landscape and describe the geography, climate, and flora and fauna of the mountain.

Archaic layers of tradition stored in the national and cultural

memory have a tendency to surface when the society is in upheaval or is undergoing significant changes.⁴⁵ The development of Mt. Paektu as living tradition in contemporary Korea might be interpreted as a “return” to particular forms of mountain worship. If the purpose of Sin Ch’aeho, Ch’e Namsön, and other Korean nationalists was to create and strengthen the image of Paektu as a cultural icon around which the people could unite,⁴⁶ then their enterprise succeeded beyond their wildest expectations. Although these Korean nationalists could not and have not foreseen the division of the Korean nation, their vision of Mt. Paektu has greatly contributed to creating a connection point between North and South Korea, a symbol of so-hoped-for unification.

Paektu Legends in Gicheon

Three contemporary Paektu legends in GiCheon lore are examined in this paper as constituent elements of Mt. Paektu as living tradition in South Korea. These and similar legends on both sides of the 38th parallel compose the body of this new tradition currently in formation. Simultaneously, these legends serve other purposes, which I will equally discuss.

The tale of Ch’önsönyö (天仙女 Immortal Woman of Heaven) and Bodhidharma’s encounter is often told to newcomers to GiCheon. This legend places GiCheon within a broader context of East Asian historical and mythological heritage, constituting a part of the more general East Asian lore centering on the Bodhidharma and on the East Asian mythology of the mountain immortals. The legend gives GiCheon cultural capital, showing that mountain worship and mountain practices are of immediate interest in modern Korea. I will quote here the version of the Ch’önsönyö legend as it appears on the GiCheon official website:⁴⁷

Bodhidharma (the 18th generation heir of Mahakasyapa, the founder of Chan Buddhism and the developer of Shaolin kungfu) learned *yökkün* from the female GiCheon grand master named Ch’önsönyö (Woman of Heaven).⁴⁸ [...] Bodhidharma heard about [her] great strength and wisdom [...]. He sought her

out in the northern mountains of Korea and asked her to spar with him. It didn't take Bodhidharma much time to realize how formidable Ch'ōnsōnnyō was. He begged her to teach him the art of GiCheon. She offered him one lesson in GiCheon, but only if he could show her something: a bouquet of red flowers in a pure red sky. And so, one snowy day in the mountains, Bodhidharma cut off his left arm to prove his sincere desire to learn GiCheon. When he threw the arm in the air, the snow all around him became soaked with blood, forming a crimson bouquet. The grand master was appeased. She saw that Bodhidharma possessed a passionate will to learn, and so she taught him the great secret of GiCheon: *yōkkūn*.⁴⁹

Chinese chronicles mention that Bodhidharma wrote a book titled *yōkkūn Kyōng* (易筋經 Chinese *Yijin Jing*).⁵⁰ Korean GiCheon adepts claim to possess the true understanding of the *yōkkūn* principle, of which, according to their mythology, only an imperfect and distorted reflection was left with the Chinese Shaolin Monastery disciples to whom Bodhidharma had passed his book. To assert the “correctness” of this legend, GiCheon practitioners point out that the Shaolin ceremonial bow involves the gesture of the right arm only; because Bodhidharma's left arm was cut off, he used just his right arm, and his disciples followed the example. Eighteen principles of bending the joints practiced in Shaolin kung-fu are interpreted by GiCheon trainees as an application of a *yōkkūn* principle, originally taught by Bodhidharma but deformed over the long years of subsequent history.

The *Yōkkūn* principle lies at the heart of GiCheon practice. GiCheon instructors were aware of the fact that the term *yōkkūn* is brought up in Chinese literature. The construction of the Ch'ōnsōnnyō and Bodhidharma legend was necessary to explicate this connection in a light favorable to GiCheon. The legend positions GiCheon practitioners as the true owners of *yōkkūn*, which they inherited from Ch'ōnsōnnyō directly, while the followers of Bodhidharma in China are left with an imperfect and distorted imitation only. The pain the adepts experience while applying the *yōkkūn* principle to their bodies during practice is objectified

and expressed metaphorically as the pain of Bodhidharma, who had cut off his arm in order to demonstrate his devotion.

While distinct in time and space but involving the same protagonist, the Ch'önsönnŏ legend borrows important motifs from Bodhidharma-related Buddhist legends: Huike (慧可), the disciple of Bodhidharma, cut off his arm to prove his sincerity, thus becoming the second Chinese patriarch of Chan after Bodhidharma.⁵¹ According to a different version, Huike's arm was cut off by scoundrels.⁵² The narrative structure of the GiCheon legend here clearly follows the Chinese legend as a story of a disciple and a master. Huike amputates his arm in order to prove his sincerity to Bodhidharma and as a result becomes his successor, but in the GiCheon legend, Bodhidharma takes the place of the disciple and becomes the next acknowledged master after the Woman of Heaven – or at least, within the constructed legendary time and space, he becomes a “GiCheon propagator dispatched to China.” He will transmit the secret teaching there, while the Woman of Heaven will continue teaching GiCheon in Korea. This legend clearly shows the progress of Bodhidharma upwards on the hierarchal ladder. From a “stranger coming from afar,” he is elevated to a disciple and then into a potential master. Implicit in the story is that through his mastery of GiCheon, Bodhidharma acquires a chance of becoming a *sinsön*, just like his teacher, the Woman of Heaven.

The Woman of Heaven is a GiCheon version of a *sinsön*. Understood this way, this legend, visualizing progressive self-cultivation, or a transmutation from mortal into immortal, reconstitutes Mt. Paektu as a space of bodily and spiritual transformation. The deeds and demeanour of the Woman of Heaven transpose GiCheon practice onto a heavenly, transcendental plane, as GiCheon is both one of her attributes and an art that she teaches. The legend builds and confirms the status of the practice as a technique of immortality. In reality, not daring to hope for final immortality, actual practitioners aspire to advance at least a few steps along this road, a journey to improve their physical-moral-mental state and life. This is how the idea of GiCheon practice as self-transformation is portrayed within the legend of Ch'önsönnŏ. The Bodhidharma legend, which “clarifies” the relationship between GiCheon and

Shaolin kung-fu, should be considered in the context of other GiCheon narrations, such as the story of a Chabu Sōnin (紫府仙人 Chinese *Zi Fu Xianren*) and Huang Di, the Yellow Emperor.

GiCheon books maintain that Chinese historian Sima Qian (司馬遷 145-86 BC) describes in his *Shiji* (史記 Records of the Scribe) how the father of Chinese civilization, the Yellow Emperor, had obtained from Chabu Sōnin a secret knowledge. The event took place at the Taep'ungsan (大風山 Chinese *Dafengshan*) mountain, which is postulated to be another name for Paektusan (白頭山 Chinese *Baitoushan*), at the palace called Samch'ōng Gung (三清宮 Chinese *Sanqing Gong*). This secret knowledge was later developed by Laozi and Zhuangzi, according to GiCheon teaching.⁵³

GiCheon associates itself with the teaching of Chabu Sōnin, the instructor of the Yellow Emperor at Mt. Paektu, where the secret knowledge was transmitted. According to the twentieth-century interpretation, the events described in the legend of Tan'gun had also occurred on Mt. Paektu. GiCheon practitioners take possession of this myth and turn it into "their own" legend, explaining it in the spirit of mind-body cultivation. I will summarize this important narrative in the following paragraph.

The legend says that God Hwanin's son, Hwanung, had a wish to descend from Heaven and live in the world of human beings. So Hwanin sent his son Hwanung to Mount T'aeback to settle there and to help humans. The Heavenly King Hwanung descended to a spot atop Mount T'aeback with three thousand followers. He called that place the "City of God." Together with his ministers, Hwanung brought culture to his people: he took charge of agriculture, allotted lifespans, illness, punishment, and the idea of good and evil. At that time a bear and a tiger living in the same cave prayed to Hwanung to transform them into human beings. The king gave them sacred mugwort and garlic, and instructed them to shun the sunlight for one hundred days. Both animals ate the herbs and avoided the sun, but the tiger was unable to complete the task and remained a tiger, while the bear became a woman. Unable to find a husband, she prayed under the altar tree for a child. Hwanung metamorphosed himself, lay with her, and begot a son called Tan'gun.⁵⁴

The famous legend of the birth of Tan'gun is appropriated by GiCheon practitioners and re-interpreted by them in the spirit of GiCheon philosophy. One hundred days of GiCheon practice are considered necessary for certain desired effects, such as preliminary healing of the body, to begin to manifest. The period of one hundred days reminds us of the events in the Tan'gun legend, and the seclusion of animals in the cave away from the sunlight is taken to be a metaphor for the painful GiCheon exercises that require endurance and forbearance. The transformation of a bear into a human being in the legend is interpreted as the transformation of the self, the goal of GiCheon practice.

These three stories figure three master-disciple relationships. In the first story, the Woman of Heaven is the master, and Bodhidharma is a disciple. In the second story, Chabu Sŏnin is the master, and the Yellow Emperor is the disciple. In the third story, Hwanung is the master, and the bear who turned into a woman is a disciple. In all three legends, the masters are mountain gods or immortals, which places the legends on the cultural continuum of East Asian mountain cults and immortality traditions. The masters transmit to their respective disciples the secret knowledge, or instill in them the ability to transform themselves. In their focus on active practical engagement and sacrifice, the stories of Tan'gun and of the Woman of Heaven embody the values of internal alchemy and nourishing life, which are manifested in contemporary Korea as *ki suryŏn* and GiCheon.

Two of the legends described above come from GiCheon lore, while the third is an ancient legend re-interpreted anew. They form an integral part of East Asian traditions of alchemy as a means of achieving immortality, or East Asian mountain culture. In all three legends, the seekers of truth encounter their teachers in the mountains. The process of ascending the mountain, or the image of the mountain itself, symbolizes the spiritual quest of the seeker and her or his ascent to the higher levels of knowledge and self-perfection, just as in the East Asian paintings described earlier in this paper. In the legends of the Woman of Heaven and Tan'gun, the ascent is not only spiritual but also physical – Bodhidharma goes up the mountain, the bear ascends from the cave up to

the mountain in her new shape, and on the mountain top she prays for a child. Her future child, Tan'gun, begotten from a union with a god at the top of a mountain, will embody the perfection she achieved through her difficult trials. In giving birth to him, she culminates her process of self-perfection.

The mountain ascent shows clearly the improvement of the personal status of the disciple: the bear turns into a human being, and, later becoming a mother of Tan'gun, turns into an ancestor of the Korean nation. Bodhidharma becomes a GiCheon teacher and almost an immortal, just like his instructor. These two legends show that the path of self-transformation is hard and painful: the bear retreats into the cave and fasts, while Bodhidharma sacrifices his own arm. The Tan'gun legend focuses not only on the mountain, but also on the cave, another important emblem in the culture of alchemy and immortality, as I have outlined above. The cave as a type of womb relates to the images of femininity, fertility, and birth, an image reinforced by the fact that the disciple in the legend is female. The motif of birth and procreation is present also in the Bodhidharma story, where the GiCheon lineage is sustained through a dramatic act of bloodshed. By his act of self-mutilation, Bodhidharma is virtually born anew, becoming a new GiCheon master and continuing the imagined GiCheon tradition.

Those who construct history and mythology—professional historians, religious leaders, artists, writers and GiCheon instructors—have to confront audiences, readers and followers. The stories they tell form an essential part of their personal and social activities, comprising one brick in the façade they present to the outside world. As GiCheon legends and other historical representations in Korea demonstrate, the “double mission” of the subjects of historical narrative is to establish their identity and clarify their relationship with “various others.”

“I” and the “Other” here are multi-layered concepts that gradually flow into each other. The “I” is the physical, bodily self, a family, a circle of friends, a community, a nation-state, a race, a profession, human kind, the cosmos. In a schematic way it might be portrayed as a “physical→familial→national→cosmic” self. On the level of the family, society, and the nation, “myself” includes the members of my family, community,

and nation-state. However, in order to clearly define and situate “myself,” the “Other,” the “not myself” must be clearly defined and situated. The Other here comes to signify “other nations”—particularly the Chinese, “other martial arts,” “other teachings.” GiCheon stories create bonds among the trainees by unifying them through common history and mythology. This is how the “GiCheon self” and the “Korean self” are built. The relationship between the “myself” and the “not myself” is thereby explicated.

As argued in this paper, *ki suryŏn* in general and GiCheon in particular are parts of greater East Asian culture of self-cultivation, of an internal alchemy aimed at nourishing life that centers on the mountains. Korean GiCheon instructors felt a need to clarify this similarity to Chinese practices in a fashion that fosters both “GiCheon” and “Korean” identity. This project was accomplished using the legends of Chabu Sŏnin and Ch’ŏnsŏnnyŏ. These two stories create a boundary that distinguishes the “followers of the true Way,” among which GiCheon adepts are at the forefront. Chinese Daoism, Laozi and Zhuangzi, Bodhidharma and Shaolin kung-fu are included and acknowledged, but their place is defined as secondary. The Yellow Emperor and Bodhidharma are iconic representations of Chinese culture, but in the Korean legends, the Yellow Emperor and Bodhidharma come to Mt. Paektu, the sacred grounds where Tan’gun was begotten, and become the students of Chabu Sŏnin and Ch’ŏnsŏnnyŏ. Chabu Sŏnin, Ch’ŏnsŏnnyŏ, and Mt. Paektu are central emblems of GiCheon and Korea. From Korea come the teachers, from China, the students.

The body of the mountain symbolizes the human body, but also the body of the nation, as Mt. Paektu since the twentieth century has served as a symbol of Korea. The legends about Bodhidharma and the Yellow Emperor that evoke an imagined cultural superiority of Korea over China occur on Mt. Paektu. In this way, Mt. Paektu itself metaphorically embodies the Korean nation and makes possible “cultural promotion,” elevating Korea to a higher status among countries.

Conclusion

The present paper has introduced three legends from the contemporary South Korean mind-body discipline GiCheon, one example of *ki suryōn* practice. One of these legends, the story of Tan'gun, is an ancient myth appropriated by GiCheon and infused with a new meaning. These legends center on the magical space of Mt. Paektu, which has symbolized Korea since the beginning of the twentieth century. I argue that these legends are expressions of what might be a "living tradition" of Mt. Paektu, which continues to develop and grow today in both North and South Korea. The nationalistic values of the legends are clearly visible in the master-disciple relationships in these stories about the Woman of Heaven and the Yellow Emperor, where the masters represent Korea while the disciples represent China. Serving as a vehicle of contemporary Korean nationalism, Mt. Paektu is simultaneously an old, sacred mountain, and the traditions and legends surrounding it are part of a greater East Asian mountain culture. The three legends I have discussed exemplify the processes of self-cultivation, manifesting the transformative effect of GiCheon on its adherents in particular and of Korean *ki suryōn* in general, thus placing these newly invented traditions within the context of old East Asian immortality culture, the practices of internal alchemy and nourishing life.

Notes

¹ This article is based on a paper presented at the 28th biennial AKSE Conference, Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic, April 20-23. It also contains elements from chapters 1, 2 and 7 of my PhD dissertation titled, "Body and *Ki* in Gicheon (氣天): Practices of Self-Cultivation in Contemporary Korea," defended on June 6, 2017 at Leiden University, the Netherlands.

² The word *yangsaeng* (Chinese *yangsheng*) though referring to ancient East Asian alchemical and medical practices of immortality and nourishing life, also indicates a contemporary phenomenon in China. This type of practice is often associated with Daoism. However, referring to grand, overarching traditions such as Buddhism and Daoism, which exist mainly as abstractions or fetishes, is not very useful for understanding the concrete practices. See also Adam Yuet Chau, "Modalities of Doing Religion and Ritual Polytypy: Evaluating the Religious Market Model from the Perspective of Chinese Religious History," *Religion* 41, no. 4 (2011): 547-68, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0048721X.2011.624691>. Chau

suggests site-specific understanding of practices, looking at their unfolding elements and how they relate to each other in concrete settings (p. 549), the approach I adopt in this paper.

³ A particular practice of GiCheon on which I focus includes gymnastics, massage, breathing, healing, and meditation, but not sexual hygiene, diet, visualization, or rules of daily behaviour.

⁴ Cathrine Despeux, “Yangshen 養生 Nourishing Life” in *The Encyclopedia of Taoism*, ed. Fabrizio Pregadio (New York: Routledge, 2008), 1148-50.

⁵ Michel Foucault, *L'Hermeneutique du sujet: Cours au Collège de France (1981-1982)* [The Hermeneutics of the subject: Courses at the Collège de France] (Paris: Gallimard, 2001), 109.

⁶ Frank Dax, “Recreational Hiking in South Korea: Transforming the Body, Transforming the Land,” *Korea Journal*, (2015): 80-102.

⁷ Hyeran U, “Tong side Han'guk ūi ki suryŏn munhwa wa musok” [Contemporary Korean Ki Suryŏn Culture and Shamanism]. *Chongkyo yŏn'gu* [Korean Study of Religion], 9 (2006): 71-113.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 71-73.

⁹ Judith Farquar and Qicheng Zhang, *Ten Thousand Things: Nurturing Life in Contemporary Beijing* (New York: Zone, 2012), 7, 211, 237.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 256, 268.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 10, 179, 217, 228, 268, 284.

¹² *Ibid.*, 28, 50, 140, 190-92, 220, 237. Acting only in the public interest, not for private interest.

¹³ *Sansin*, *Toksŏng* (獨聖 Lonely Saint) and *Ch'ilsŏng* (七聖 Seven Stars God) are usually enshrined together in *samsŏnggak* (三聖閣 three saints shrine).

¹⁴ David Mason, *Spirit of the Mountains*, (Seoul: Hollym International, 1999), 37-38, 55, 81, 97. Most *sansin* are male, but there are also depictions of female *sansin*. See for example female *sansin* images in Ssanggyesa (雙溪寺) and Taewŏnsa (大源寺), Buddhist temples at Chiri mountain. *Sinsŏn* are often painted on outer walls of Buddhist temples, or as accompanying *sansin*. *Sinsŏn* are sometimes called *pisŏn* (飛仙 flying immortals) or *sŏnnyŏ* (仙女 immortal women).

¹⁵ Kwŏnsu Na, “Han'guk sinjonggyo ūi sŏndo sasang yŏn'gu [A study on Sŏndo Thought in Korean New Religions],” *Sŏndo munhwa* [Journal of Korean Sŏndo Culture], no. 12 (2012): 409-43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* Tan'gun, a founder of a first Korean state, is recorded in the *Samguk Yusa* as a son of a bear who transformed into a woman, and Hwanung, a god who descended on Mt. Taebaek from Heaven. Upon retirement Tan'gun became a *sansin*. See also Chunhyŏng Pak, “Sinhwa ka tŭllyŏjunŭn Tan'gun iyagi” (The Story of Tan'gun Told by the Legend) in *Kojosŏn, Tan'gun, Puyŏ*, ed. Koguryo Research Foundation (Seoul: Koguryo Research Foundation, 2004), 88-89.

¹⁷ Sŏndo munhwa yŏn'guwŏn [Research Institute of Sŏndo Culture], *Han'guk sŏndo ūi yŏksa wa munhwa* [History and Culture of Korean Sŏndo], ed. Sondŏ munhwa yŏn'guwŏn, (Ch'ŏnan: International Graduate University for Peace Press, 2006). See also Sŭngho Yi, *Han'guk sŏndo wa hyŏndaek Tanhak* [Korean Sŏndo and Contemporary Tanhak] (Seoul: Kukhak charyowŏn, 2015).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Kwönsu Na, “Han’guk sinjonggyo.”

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 411, note 2.

²¹ Kyönghui Chöng, “Hyöndaee Tan’gun undong üi saeroun chön’gae wa Tanhak [The New Development of Tan’gun Movement and Tanhak in Contemporary Korea],” *Sōndo munhwa* [Journal of Korean *Sōndo* Culture] (2015): 155.

²² Tongu Kang, “Saeroun sinhwa mandülgi: chaeya sahak e taehan tto tarün ihae” [Making a New Myth: Another View on the *Chaya Sahak*],” *Chöngsin munhwa yön’gu* [Korean Studies Quarterly] 23, no. 1 (2000): 14.

²³ Hüisang Kim and Kich’önmun Pommun, eds., *Kich’ön* (Seoul: Ch’orokpaemaejiksü, 2000), 11.

²⁴ Daeyeol Kim, “Symbolisme de la Force Vitale en Chine Ancienne: Modèles et Significations dans L’alchimie Taoïste Opératoire (Etudes des Pratiques Alchimiques du Baopuzi Neipian 抱朴子内篇 4e siècle après J.-C. en Chine)” [Symbolism as a Life Force in Ancient China: Models and Meanings of Alchemy in Taoism (Studies of the Alchemical Practices of Baopuzi Neipian, 4th century CE)] (doctoral dissertation, Université de Paris-Sorbonne [Paris 4], 2000), 145.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 133-34, 141, 148, 150.

²⁶ Kiyohiko Munakata, *Sacred Mountains in Chinese Art: An Exhibition Organized by the Kramert Art Museum and Curated by Kiyohiko Munakata: Kramert Art Museum, Nov. 9-Dec. 16, 1990, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Jan. 25-Mar. 31* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 137.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 35.

²⁸ Cathrine Despeux, *Immortelles de la Chine Ancienne: Taoïsme et Alchimie Féminine* [Immortal Women of Ancient China: Taoism and Feminine Alchemy] (Puisseaux: Pardès, 1990), 194.

²⁹ Daeyeol Kim, “Symbolisme,” 17-20.

³⁰ Catherine Despeux, *Immortelles*, 195.

³¹ Kiyohiko Munakata, *Sacred Mountains*, 134-35.

³² Daeyeol Kim, “Symbolisme,” 234.

³³ Kristofer Schipper, *The Taoist Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

³⁴ Sökhwa Kang, “Chöson hugi Paektusan e taehan insik üi pyönhwa [Changes in the Perception of Paektu Mountain in Late Chöson],” *Chöson sidae sa hakpo* [The Journal of Choson Dynasty History] 30 (2011): 195-224.

³⁵ Ch’ansüng Pak, “Paektusanüi ‘minjok yöngsan’ üroüi p’yösanghwa [Depicting Mt. Paektu as a ‘National Sacred Mountain’],” *Tongasia munhwa yöngu* [Journal of East Asian Cultures] (2013): 23

³⁶ Tan’gunkyo (literally ‘the religion of Tan’gun’) is one of the new religions of Korea, originating in the beginning of the twentieth century and connected to the independence struggle. Under the conditions of the Imperial Japanese occupation of Korea, the name was later changed into Taejongkyo in order to obscure the nationalistic character of the religion.

³⁷ Ch’ansüng Pak, “Paektusanüi,” 26-29; also Yönghun Yi, “Woe tasi haebang chonhusa inka [Why Again Pre- and Post-liberation History],” in *Haebang Chönhusa Cheinsik* [New

perceptions of pre- and post-liberation history], ed. Chihyang Pak, Ilyöng Kim, Ch'öl Kim, and Yönghun Yi (Seoul: Ch'aeksesang, 2006), 28-29.

³⁸ Ibid., 30.

³⁹ Ibid., 31.

⁴⁰ Kyeri Pak, "Paektusan: mandüröjin chönt'ong kwa p'yösang [Mt. Paektu: The Invention of Tradition and the Symbolism]," *Misulsa Hakpo* [Korean Journal of Art History] 36 (2011): 49-50, 58. See also Robert Winstanley-Chesters and Victoria Ten, "New Goddesses at Paektu Mountain: Two Contemporary Korean Myths," *S/N Korean Humanities* 2, no. 1 (March 2016): 151-79.

⁴¹ Kyeri Pak, "Paektusan."

⁴² Söhaeng Yi, "Paektusan üi hyönjaejök üiüi [Contemporary Significance of Mt. Paektu]," in *Paektusan: hyönjae wa mirae rül marhanda* [Mt. Paektu: Speaking the Present and the Future], ed. Hangukhak chungang yönguwön [Academy of Korean Studies] (Kyönggi-do Sönnam-si: Chönjöggil, 2010): 113-18.

⁴³ Ibid. See also Ünt'aek Kim, Sönyöng Yun, Ünsun Chu, *Yet chidoro pon Paektusan* [Mt. Paektu Seen through the Prism of Ancient Maps] (Pyongyang: Paekkwajöng ch'ulp'ansa, 2014).

⁴⁴ Ibid., 23; Pöpchong Cho, "Paektusan kwa Changpaeksan, kürigo Manju [Mt. Paektu and Mt. Changpaek, and Manchuria]," in *Paektusan: hyönje wa mirae rül marhanda* [Mt. Paektu: Speaking the Present and the Future], ed. Hangukhak chungang yönguwön [Academy of Korean Studies] (Kyönggi-do Sönnam-si: Chönjöggil, 2010), 47.

⁴⁵ L.L. Abayeva, *Kul't gor yi buddizm v Buryatii* [The Cult of Mountains and Buddhism in Buryatia] (Moscow: Nauka, 1992), 113, 127.

⁴⁶ Yönghun Yi, "Woe tasi haebang," 30.

⁴⁷ The legend is reproduced here with a few slight changes, such as romanization and spelling. See also Kit'ae Lee, *GiCheon Instructional DVD Volume One* (Seoul: Kich'ön Sangmuwön, 2002); Lee indicates that the legend occurred at Mt. Paektu. Another version of this legend says that prior to meeting Ch'önsönnö, Bodhidharma prayed to the *sansin* of Paektu mountain (see Kim and Ponmun, *Kich'ön*, 53).

⁴⁸ *Yökkün*, the principle of maximally bending the joints in GiCheon, facilitating the flow of life energy (ki 氣) while enhancing physical, moral and mental well-being, has been explained in more detail in one of the previous sections of this paper.

⁴⁹ Kit'ae Lee, "'Yeokgeun,' GiCheon, A Korean Tradition for Self-Healing and Self-Awareness," accessed November 26, 2016, <http://www.gicheon.org>.

⁵⁰ Meir Shaha, *The Shaolin Monastery: History, Religion and the Chinese Martial Arts* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008), 12-19.

⁵¹ Jack Maguire, *Essential Buddhism* (New York: Pocket Books, 2001), 58.

⁵² Jeffrey Broughton, *The Bodhidharma Anthology: the Earliest Records of Zen* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 62.

⁵³ Kim and Ponmun, *Kich'ön*, 61.

⁵⁴ I have summarized the Tan'gun legend on the basis of its translation in Peter H. Lee and Wm. Theodore de Barry, eds., *Sources of Korean Tradition Volume I* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 5-6.