

A Feminising Revolution: The Unification Movement and the ‘Age of Women’

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Following the demise of Mun Sŏn-myŏng in 2012, the South Korean Unification Movement has entered an era of female leadership. Mun’s widowed wife, Han Hak-cha, rose to become the group’s sole new leader. Drawing on a distinct (co-)messianic narrative, while resuming on the given millenarian trajectory – both chiefly shaped by Mun – Han successfully coped with the theological and organisational challenges of the post-Mun age, establishing herself as the prime religious and administrative authority. With the completion of a most crucial providential event in 2013 (‘Foundation Day’), Han is believed to have ultimately assumed a virtually divine-like theological status, rendering her teachings and actions infallible (qua providential desideratum) according to Unificationist mainline thinking. In the wake of Foundation Day, Han continues to inscribe into Unificationism the mechanics of gender equality and the significance of the female portion of messianity even more resonantly, further elevating her soteriological position and thus the contribution of women to ‘kingdom-building’ in general. This paper discusses in a first step the UM’s tradition of female leadership in the past, also introducing the theological foundation of gender relationship. Thereafter, the providential dynamics, especially concerning the so-called ‘Age of Women’ (proclaimed by Mun in 1992) will be outlined. The third major part of the paper deals with post-Foundation Day theology and historical developments, centring on Han’s concomitant evolution into God’s ‘Only-Begotten Daughter.’

Unification Church; Han Hak-cha; Korean religion; new religious movement; religion and gender

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1. Introduction

Asked about the founder and long-term leader of the South Korean Unification Movement (UM),¹ Mun Sŏn-myŏng (1920–2012), at his prime, first generation Unificationists often chucklingly relate of a virile and grounded man, buoyant and with an at times earthy sense of humour. Raised in a Confucian-entrenched patriarchal environment and espousing a highly sexualised male-dominated messianic worldview, it may be small wonder that Mun's thought, and concomitantly the Unificationist (especially post-marriage) lifeworld, has been saliently pervaded by 'androcentric gender arrangements' (Lowney 1986, p. 243). Commencing in the 1980s, Mun's traditionalist views slowly incorporated a feminist dimension, which grew more conspicuous in the 1990s, and extended to a more egalitarian discourse in the 2000s. The rising impact of feminist theological voices notwithstanding, gender roles in Unificationism are still doctrinally endorsed and remain conservative.² Likewise despite promoting gender balance *in praxi* in his late years, Mun did not sufficiently implant this notion theologically – and in particular providentially. Following Mun's demise and the subsequent solemnisation of Foundation Day (*kiwŏnjŏl*), that is, the inception of substantial Cheon Il Guk (*ch'ŏnilguk*) or the alleged dawn of the Kingdom of Heaven on earth and in heaven, a veritable paradigm shift ensued: a 'feminising revolution' in theological and personnel terms. The 'Age of Women' (*yŏsŏng sidae*), already proclaimed by Mun in 1992, solidified most visibly in the post-Mun era with the doctrinally sanctioned elevation of his widowed wife, Han Hak-cha (b. 1943), as the UM's unconditioned leader, and the inauguration of the couple's fifth daughter, Mun Sŏn-jin (b. 1976), as the FFWPU international president and Han's successor-in-waiting. Moreover, the representation of Mun's wider family in key leadership positions within the UM has become entirely female involving, next to Han and Mun Sŏn-jin, two of Han's daughters-in-law, namely Ch'oe Yŏn-a (b. 1973) and Mun Hun-suk (b. 1963). Both were personally selected by Han to represent the 'Family of True Parents' (*ch'am pumonim kajŏng*) in the 13-seat Cheon Il Guk Supreme Council (*ch'ŏnilguk ch'oego wiwŏnhoe*), the UM's major legislative organ established by her in 2014 (Pokorny 2014, pp. 140–142).³ Despite

1 The UM comprises a cluster of organisations, businesses, and initiatives, millennially bound to a religious body at its core (Pokorny 2013a), the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (FFWPU; *Segye P'yŏnghwa T'ongil Kajŏng Yŏnhap*), formerly known as the Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity (HSAUWC; *Segye Kidokkyo T'ongil Sillyŏng Hyŏphoe*) founded in 1954 in Seoul.

2 The latter is not surprising, given that the majority of Unifications today still belong to the first generation of adherents, most of which have been brought up appreciating a traditional form of gender relations. Likewise, many members reside in largely male-controlled societies such as South Korea and Japan.

3 As FFWPU international president, Mun Sŏn-jin occupies additional (mostly

these developments, it is not to say that women have appeared in relevant offices throughout the UM's hierarchy. In fact, the vast majority of top-ranking positions within the South Korean and international movement are still in male (Korean) hands.⁴ All FFWPU continental directors are male, as are all leaders of other major UM organisations apart from the Women's Federation for World Peace. One notable exception is the Universal Peace Federation (UPF) Africa Regional Chair held by Kathy Rigney (b. 1946) (who is also True Parents' Special Emissary to Africa) – the ten other UPF regional offices as well as the international secretariat and the United Nations Relations office are led by men. The reason for the still persistent male dominance in leadership circles is historical/social (see note 2) and theological. The latter in particular is being tackled by Han, most noticeably since the beginning of the post-Mun era of this present 'Age of Women.' This paper aims to explore this new gender paradigm in the UM and its doctrinal underpinnings, with special attention to post-Foundation Day Unification theology. The discussion is precluded by a discussion of the group's female leadership tradition in the past.

2. Female Leadership in the Unification Movement

Formal leadership in the UM has invariably been male-centred, whereas the movement was maintained chiefly owing to the fervent commitment of female adherents, who always represented the majority of members. Key disciples were normally recruited from the pool of male followers. Yet, the Unificationist tradition knows of a few women, whose impact on Mun and the entire movement are considered most essential, (for some time) eclipsing the role of any male follower. What makes these individuals special is that they appeared in the group's consciousness not as mere disciples and wives, but as educating mothers. Their theologically inscribed position as a husband's servient object partner was discounted in favour of an active parenting position put in an object relation to a providentially vital course and/or protagonist. According to Unification theology

honorary) leading posts in UM organisations and administrative bodies. Accordingly, she also acts, among others, as UPF Chair and the chairperson of the Cheon Il Guk Supreme Council.

4 The mid- and low-level administration, especially in Europe, has less rigid gender boundaries. For example, among 35 national leaders of the European UM in 2015, nine were female (Andorra, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Kosovo, Macedonia, Poland, Slovenia Spain, and Sweden). Internationally, women rather tend, if at all, to fill deputy posts under male supervision, such as that of Vice President of FFWPU Europe (Carolyn Handschin [b. 1953]) and UPF Asia Regional Chair Secretary General (Ursula McLackland [b. 1953]), or, as is the case with the True Parents' Special Emissary to Europe (Mun Nan-yöng [b. 1942]), are paired up with a male colleague (i.e., Mun's husband).

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– borrowing from *yīn-yáng* thought – the ideal of creation comes to fruition through ‘Origin-Division-Union Action’ (*chǒngbunhap chagyong*). From God (*hananim*), the “eternally self-existent absolute transcending time and space” (WK I.1.2, p. 29), through divine energy or the ‘original force of all beings’ (*manyu wōllyōk*), emanates complementarity that needs to be fused together by ‘Give and Receive Action’ (*susu chagyong*) in order to generate harmony, that is, forming a subject-object communion between God and creation (WK I.1.2, pp. 33–34). Based on this principle, and echoing the archetypal relationship of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, man manifests as the subject (*chuch’e*) and woman as the object (*taesang*). Traditionally, the object position conferred to women was held as being tantamount to passivity and obedience. In this reading of creation theology (or teleology), wives were put in the position of motherly caretakers silently and devotedly supporting the cause of their husband. Such image of idealised female behaviour found its role-model in Han Hak-cha, the Unificationists’ ‘True Mother’ (*ch’am ōmōnim*), an honorific (and a salvational rank) she obtained thanks to her marriage with Mun in 1960. Mindful of the UM’s long-time gender protocol, for decades Han epitomised this kind of womanly conduct. With her husband arriving at a more senior age in the late 1980s and 1990s, however, Han slowly embarked on an emancipatory transformation extending her motherly portfolio to that of a matron in line with the (admittedly only sparse) tradition of female leadership within the movement. With her metamorphosis that appreciably began with the onset of the Age of Women in 1992, and accelerated in the post-Mun era, Han set a precedent for many members for openly active and firmly engaging womanhood not shying away from taking the lead while retaining motherly affection and courage.

The number of female authorities who had a lasting spiritual and/or organisational impact on the anatomy of the wider UM is very limited. A major early member, pioneer missionary, leader, and chief theologian of the group was Kim Yōng-un (1914–1989). A former professor at Ewha Womans University, she became follower in 1954. From the beginning of her ‘church career,’ she was prominently involved in systematising Unification doctrine and furthering the mission abroad. She thus became the first missionary to the United States in 1959, incorporating the national branch of the HSAUWC in 1961. Kim laid the foundation for the global mission and,⁵ accordingly, became the most important Korean contact for the emergent international community throughout the 1960s and early 1970s. In 1975, she was appointed professor (being the only Unificationist among the initial faculty) at the newly established Unification Theological Seminary in Barrytown, United States. Shortly after her arrival in the United States, in 1960, she published the first English edition of the UM’s then central scripture, *The Divine Principles*, based on the *Wōlli haesōl* (Explanation of the

5 Indeed, the majority of international missionary pioneers stem from Kim’s California commune.

Principle; 1957). Seven further editions and numerous other publications served as the main literature for legions of first generation Unificationists in the West, consolidating her status as the most seminal UM theologian. Over the years, the relationship between Mun and Kim turned increasingly uneasy, with her eventually being side-lined.⁶ The role attributed to her by (Western) Unificationists is that of a highly intellectual and critical mind, a strident (and occasionally confrontational) guardian of theological systematicity and church customs (which evoked steady conflict with the male Korean leadership including Mun). Her picture as staunch educator, wielding – for some time – doctrinal authority only second to Mun and Yu Hyo-wŏn (1914–1970),⁷ contrasts the then Unificationist imagination of ‘true womanhood.’ Kim successfully evaded the group’s gender expectations, also eluding the marriage policy deemed crucial from a millenarian and soteriological point of view.⁸ Her leadership position is unique in that she ‘led’ from beyond the gender boundaries normatively set by Mun and the (male) church elders.

Another type of female Unificationist leader can be found in the person of Ch’oe Wŏn-bok (1916–2006). Like Kim, Ch’oe was a former professor at Ewha Womans University and an early-day member joining with her colleague in 1954. Leaving her family upon converting,⁹ her intellectual standing and shiny case of conversion, which had a publicity effect, quickly lent her a prominent position within the group. She soon became a close confidant of Mun, who commissioned her to attend the young Han Hak-cha, preparing her for the marriage and mentoring her thereafter for 17 years. From the 1960s until the late 1970s, Ch’oe remained Han’s chaperone and Mun’s most trusted aide. Ch’oe’s role was assigned an utmost providential importance by Mun, who saw her paving the way for True Mother. In fact, he viewed Ch’oe to “stand in the position of a true wife and a mother in the fallen world”¹⁰ (Mun 1989, p. 12) qua Mary, Jesus’ wife, and Leah, representing role model qualities that had to be emulated by Han. Other than Kim, Ch’oe was of a more traditional motherly character, although – like Kim – she, for the most part, evaded the common necessity of blessed wedlock, at least physically. In 1998, she was blessed to the spirit of the historical Buddha.¹¹

6 Kim did not receive a formal Unificationist funeral ceremony, or *Seunghwa* (*sünghwa*), today’s *Seonghwa* (*sönghwa*).

7 Yu was first president of the HSAUWC Korea branch and author of the *Wöllli haesöl* and its revised version, the *Wöllli kangnon* (Exposition of the Principle; 1966).

8 Except for a short-time marriage – allegedly with an outsider or at least a member in no good standing(!) – formally blessed by Mun in 1964 (*NAF* I.4, 1964, p. 7).

9 One of her sons, Sök Chun-ho (b. 1944), became a member many years later, rising to be FFWPU Korea president (2009–2012).

10 [...] 타락한 세계의 참부인으로서 하나의 어머니와 같은 입장에 서 가지고 [...]. This and all other translations from Korean in this paper are by the author.

11 At this event in New York’s Madison Square Garden, three other female members

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She was also tasked by Mun to produce an English translation of the *Wŏlli kangnon*, which remained the definitive version (and source text for translations into other Western languages) of the Unificationist scripture from 1973 to 1996. Ch'oe's leadership position is equally unique inasmuch as she 'led' as the 'second mother' physically and spiritually – albeit without a husband with whom to conclude Origin-Division-Union Action and thus from beyond the expected soteriological locus – fulfilling a crucial mission in God's providence according to Mun.

A third type of leader in the Unificationist tradition is Han's mother, Hong Sun-ae (1914–1989), who joined the UM in 1955. Hong, too, has an uncharacteristic vita. She gave birth to her only child before marriage, and was soon thereafter abandoned by her husband remaining single for the rest of her life. Contemporary accounts, which are relatively rare and soft-spoken, emphasise her piousness and that she spent her life for the sake of Han. Only years after her passing, starting in 1995, she became a leadership figure as a spiritual being. In the Unificationist imagination, Hong evolved into a powerful spiritual leader, providing counsel and wielding salvific authority in the physical world through her mediumistic channel Kim Hyo-nam (b. 1952). According to tradition, Hong was charged by Mun and Han to assist one of their deceased sons, Mun Hŭng-jin (1966–1984), in the spirit world to liberate the spirits from Satan's clutches (Beverley 2005, pp. 49–51). In addition, through her medium and the spiritual assistance of angels, Hong, who, ever since the beginning of her term, is affectionately called Dae Mo Nim (*taemonim*; i.e., 'Great Mother') by members, is also believed to be able to purify and cure the living as well as to jointly liberate members' ancestors from the Satanic lineage. With her post mortem transformation, Hong all of a sudden came to receive wide attention as a paragon of motherly care and tutorship, coaching Han passionately, and, like Ch'oe, contributing vitally to her spiritual ripening in times past.¹² In fact, Hong's newly created soteriological status (which was again achieved devoid of a salvationally important male counterpart) even overshadowed that of Ch'oe's. Hong's spiritual empowerment naturally vested her medium, Kim, with equal authority.

Kim represents a fourth type of female leadership in the Unificationist tradition, closest to that of Han herself. Whereas Hong appeared as a transcendent Redeemer and healer, Kim was presented as her worldly extension and vessel. Indeed, Kim came to be so closely identified with Hong by many members, that

were blessed to major personalities of the spirit world: Confucius, Muhammad, and Socrates. Jesus was already blessed by Mun to a female adherent in 1971.

12 Lately, with the rising emphasis given to Han, her life and ministry, including her 'spiritual upbringing,' another formative spiritual mentor is receiving growing prominence, namely Han's grandmother Cho Wŏn-mo (1889–1962). Cho is commonly depicted as a pious but more earthly person compared to Hong, an example of unwavering devotion to one's children, being of a more practical bent. Cho also appeared, although less prominently, in the UM's mediumistic context.

she was (and still is) likewise often informally referred to as Dae Mo Nim. In 2000, she was bestowed the formal title of Hoon Mo Nim (*hunmonim*) or ‘Teaching Mother’ by Mun and Han, stressing her newly gained role as Hong’s mouthpiece and saviour-like figure. The official church narrative relates that Kim, an ordinary blessed devotee,¹³ was picked by Hong in 1992, and together for the next three years established the required spiritual conditions, while also being challenged by Satan, in order to attain their salvific ability in the physical world. Consequently, from the mid-1990s, Kim rose to become a most influential providential figure much revered by Unificationists, especially in South Korea and Japan. Thanks to her mediumistic link, she virtually turned into a worldly saviour in her own right alongside True Parents, physically leading the so-called Ch’öngp’yöng providence and offering hundreds of related workshops.¹⁴ In keeping with her increasing spiritual prominence and weight, and supported in particular by Mun, Kim’s worldly leadership prospered, especially in the late 2000s and early 2010s. The UM’s head medium and chief spiritual architect of the *Ch’öngp’yöng* construction project, Kim’s career initially advanced also in the post-Mun era with her appointment as Cheon Il Guk Supreme Council member, before it took a sudden halt in late 2014. Not only was she stripped of her council position but, three months later, her term as master medium was declared to be concluded, turning her into an ordinary member once again. The underlying reason for her dismissal was the increasingly conflictual relationship with Han and the senior church administration also due to allegations of embezzlement. Her expulsion was internally communicated as the consequence of her corruption by evil spirits. With Kim being silenced, Dae Mo Nim too forfeited her prime leadership role. Accordingly, she was recently (late 2015) placed by Han under the lead of Mun Hyojin (1962–2008) – another of her deceased sons. Female leadership in the UM, diverse in its individual genesis as it may be, is rooted in and animated by the image of motherhood. Specifically, it is the rearing aspect that is transcended to encompass key protagonists of the providence (Ch’oe and Hong and their parenting responsibility towards True Mother; Ch’oe’s relationship with Mun) and the community of Unificationists at large (Hong and Kim Hyo-nam and their salvific duty and imparting of spiritual knowledge, and Kim Yöng-un and her transmission of the Unificationist way). It is therefore only natural that the role of

13 Unlike the other three female leaders portrayed, Kim’s vita is ideal-typical in terms of soteriological development inasmuch as she raised a ‘blessed family.’ However, her status as ‘wife’ hardly received attention, as did her husband.

14 The area of *Ch’öngp’yöng*, the major UM site, in Kap’yöng county, Kyönggi province, was to be built as a model of the coming substantial Kingdom of Heaven on Earth or Cheon Il Guk. An area of considerable spiritual magnitude, the CheongPyeong Heaven and Earth Training Centre (*Ch’önju Ch’öngp’yöng suryönwön*) located therein, served for many years as the venue for the various purification rituals under Kim’s aegis, which were to form an essential part of the providence.

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true motherhood is embodied the fullest in Han Hak-cha herself, the UM's True Mother and 'True Parent of Heaven, Earth and Humankind' (*ch'ŏnjin ch'am pumo*). According to the classical tradition, Han was spiritually 'raised' for forty years, obtaining all the necessary qualifications upon which Mun could eventually open up the Age of Women in 1992. This Age of Women then built the basis for God's 'Only-Begotten Daughter' (*toksaengnyŏ*) to emerge. Both the providential dynamics of this time and Han's 'apotheosis' will be discussed in the following two sections.

3. The Age of Women

The present Age of Women was formally promulgated by Mun Sŏn-myŏng on April 10, 1992, during the inauguration ceremony of the Women's Federation for World Peace (*Segye p'yŏnghwa yŏsŏngyŏnhap*) in Seoul's Olympic Stadium. A historic watershed, the declaration is supposed to be the culmination of providential action executed by Mun and his wife starting saliently 32 years earlier. This then most momentous caesura in God's providence refers to the formation of the True Couple (*ch'am pubu*), Mun and Han, through their blessing in 1960. According to Unification theology, this blessing or the Marriage [Feast] of the Lamb (*ŏrinyang honin [chanch'i]*) ultimately consummated the Edenic ideal of an untainted union willed by God that was unfulfilled by Adam and Eve. Through this conjugal union free from sin and centred on God, offspring should have been procreated, enabling the establishment of the so-called Four Position Foundation (*sawi kidae*). That is to say, a 'true family,' where husband, wife, and child(ren) live in harmony piously united in God. This nucleus of the ideal world envisioned by God and the aim of creation, should have extended in heaven and earth through True Family's posterity which would have carried on the 'divine lineage' (*hananim'ŭi hyŏlt'ong*). The archangel Nusiel's jealousy and hubris, however, disrupted God's plan in that he – thus becoming Satan – spiritually defiled Eve, who in turn soiled Adam. Humankind's first ancestors accordingly inherited and further passed on the archangel's fallenness, befouling humanity and creating 'hell on earth' (Pokorny 2017; *WK I.2*, pp. 70–108). The classical narrative continues that pursuing God's indomitable will to restore His bond with humankind, which was sundered through the Fall, Mun qua Messiah (*mesia*) – a salvational figure without sin and divinity – chose Han Hak-cha to become his 'restored Eve' in blessed matrimony. The blessing salvifically empowered the couple, transforming them into 'True Parents of humankind.' Mun and Han are believed to be the first (and thus archetypal) couple that unified sinlessly, embracing God in undiluted mutual love. The 1960 Marriage [Feast] of the Lamb thenceforth granted Mun in tandem with Han the power to bestow redemption through the blessing ritual upon those willing (and seen fit), removing any taints of Edenic fallenness and therefore resuscitating them as 'children of God.'

Triggered by this ‘cosmic’ event, over 400 proclamations (up to Foundation Day) followed at accelerating speed marking the stepwise advance of God’s providence (O 2012). The 1992 proclamation of the Age of Women represents such a crucial stage in the UM’s millenarian project. According to Unification theology, the promulgation of the Age of Women was a consequence of Han’s spiritual evolution. Until two years earlier, Han was considered to be in a subordinate position to her husband. For her to fully grow into her designated role, she needed to be properly ‘educated’ (while being treated poorly) by Mun and others (i. e. Ch’oe Wŏn-bok and Hong Sun-ae). Hence, she hitherto remained for the main part utterly passive in public, embodying in members’ views self-sacrificing womanly obedience vis-à-vis a husband’s authority. During a ceremony on March 27, 1990, Mun solemnly declared his wife ‘second founder’ (*chae 2kyoju*) of the UM, and liberator of womanhood (Mun 1993a). Han’s spiritual evolution seemed concluded so that she thenceforth was spiritually on a par with Mun (CBG 12.4, p. 1438). Her equal status qua True Mother was theologically extended to all women, elevating them spiritually to stand side by side their husbands and thus giving them the possibility to exercise the same millenarian impact. In order to actualise the newly achieved authority, Han was required to become a publicly active religious leader in line with her husband; a career that started in September and October 1991 with the inauguration of the Japan and Korea chapter respectively of the Women’s Federation for Peace in Asia (*Asia p’yŏnghwa yŏsŏng yŏnhap*), intended to unite the women of these two providentially significant countries and, accordingly, put an end to both nations’ historical enmity. Bringing the pursuit of unification to a global level, the establishment of the Women’s Federation for World Peace in 1992 was deemed a natural consequence. Moreover, from a theological perspective, Han, being in the position of all world leaders (qua bride) who hitherto neglected to receive Mun (qua bridegroom) as Messiah, owing to her spiritual accomplishments could successfully indemnify this failure (CBG 12.4, pp. 1419–1429). Her appearance at the ‘world stage’ in this event is held to have fundamentally completed her growth process into a salvational figure (virtually) equal to Mun, unifying in messiahship.¹⁵ Since that time,

15 Whereas the general outlook of Unification eschatology is fixed, the individual stages leading to the complete unfolding of substantial Cheon Il Guk are being disclosed only gradually by True Parents, which allows to keep ‘kingdom-building’ morale and activities at a continuously high level. Likewise, the topos of millenarian imminence is re-energised every once in a while by the leadership to foster members’ commitment in support of the group’s overall millenarian programme. Hence, a vital aspect in securing attention among the faithful is the continual proclamation of alleged decisive providential progress made by True Parents and the community of Unificationists in general. This also involves further salvational transformation of Mun and Han. Despite Mun’s general acknowledgment of his wife’s equal theological status, he occasionally indicated his spiritual seniority (and thus Han’s need to catch up salvifically). For instance, in June

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Mun and Han form a co-messianity, conjointly styling themselves publicly (since July 1992) as Saviour (*kuseju*), Lord of the Second Advent (*chaerimju*), and Messiah. Han's providential achievements, accordingly, prompted Mun to proclaim the Age of Women, in which – beacons by True Parents – women will push ahead in a leading role the group's millenarian agenda (emulating Han), “putting an end to a world of war, violence, oppression, exploitation, and crime led by men, [...] and building an ideal world filled with peace, love, and freedom” (Mun 1993b).¹⁶

In subsequent years, Han increasingly came to the forefront, assuming broad leadership fuelled by rising theological significance. Her profile was sharpened through independent public appearances. Most importantly, Mun continued crediting her with momentous providential achievements, involving, for example, the surrender of Satan in March 1999 (Pokorny 2017). Furthermore, Mun started to repeatedly and explicitly clarify his wish to pass on full organisational authority to his wife in future years. In the Age of Women the number of providential proclamations multiplied, especially in the 2000s. Many of these millenarian watersheds entailed a further augmentation of True Parents' theological attributes. The greater the alleged impact of their providential action over the years, the loftier became Mun and Han's role in the Unificationist millenarian understanding. A second blessing in 2003 (Pokorny 2013b, pp. 135–136) and various coronation ceremonies from 2004 onward – Mun and Han becoming ‘King and Queen of Peace’ (*p'yŏnghwa'ŭi wang*) – paved the way for a further salvational metamorphosis of the couple, culminating in a proclamation in 2010, in which Mun and Han, emphasising the cosmic triumph of their ministry, transcended themselves from the status of ‘True Parents of Heaven and Earth’ (formerly True Parents of Humankind) to True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind. Whereas Han garnered growing visibility and salvific fame among members, Mun gradually cut down his public activities transferring into semi-retirement in 2008. Yet, old age and health impairment notwithstanding, in his last years Mun led the UM's millenarian narrative to new heights, singling out one particular goal, namely Foundation Day on February 22, 2013. Mun envisaged Foundation Day as the conclusion of his divine mission, which – according to the emic view – started through an epiphany 78 years earlier. Because Mun died prior to this “greatest celebration of the greatest day in human history” (Yang and Kim 2013), while previously also remaining reticent about details of the immediate post-Founda-

1999, Mun proclaimed that his wife now qualified as ‘Mother of Three Ages’ (*3sidae'ŭi ōmŏni*), “rising to a position where she could receive Heaven's blessing on an equal footing with Father” ([...] 아버님과 대등한 자리에 서서 하늘의 축복을 받을 수 있는 자리에 들어왔다는 것을 의미합니다; *CBG* 12.4, p. 1442).

16 이제 메시아로 오시는 참부모 앞에 지금까지 남성들이 주도했던 전쟁과 폭력, 억압과 착취, 그리고 범죄의 세계를 종결짓고 평화와 사랑 그리고 자유가 넘치는 이상 세계를 실현할 참된 일꾼들이 바로 이 시대의 여성들인 것입니다.

tion Day era, the UM leadership had creative leeway for interpretation adjusting the theological meaning and outcome of the event to consolidate his widow's claim for power. Indeed, Han emerged out of Foundation Day adopting a novel theological identity as the unrestricted leader of the UM. Her newly gained status lends Han not only full administrative control over the group but lets her even theologially outshine that of Mun while alive.

4. The Only-Begotten Daughter

“She is the queen of heaven, the queen of this nation, and the grandmother of her ancestors, the mother [of humankind], the wife [of God], and the daughter [of God]” (Mun 2003).¹⁷ In spite of the soteriological merits Han already obtained before Foundation Day – the status of God's wife was not technically actualised until Mun and Han's third blessing as part of the Foundation Day ceremony (see below) – her husband's physical presence and his presentation of a male heir in 2008 (i. e. Mun Hyöng-jin, b. 1979) kept leaving to her a subordinated role to Mun and her youngest son in the public view. However, shortly after Mun's funeral, Han announced to UM leaders that she would henceforth take the lead more emphatically; a step that reshaped her identity involving crucial changes in personnel, organisational, and theological structures. Hagiographical accounts – some of which were gradually prepared during Mun's last years of leadership – started to be communicated more markedly. For example, the 2012 December issue of the English member magazine *Today's World* (now discontinued and replaced by *True Peace*) reports on Han's childhood, relating, among others, of an attempt of Satan killing the baby-girl, which was prevented by her mother, Hong; early prophetic voices that recognised in Han heaven's future bride; and an upbringing preparing her in devotion, education, chastity, and femininity for the Lord of the Second Advent (2012, pp. 12–17, 35). With the passing of Mun, Han was quick to take the reins. Before, Mun had three of their children occupy top leadership posts. Most prominently, in 2008 he appointed his seventh son, Mun Hyöng-jin, as FFWPU international and Korea president, thus passing on his religious legacy in a dynastic fashion. Yet, tensions, which had formed slowly over the years between Han and this triumvirate of ‘True Children,’ erupted soon after Mun's death, resulting in their stepwise dismissal. Euphemistically, ‘unfilial behaviour’ was taken as the formal reason for their removal from office. More concretely, Han responded to growing criticism from members, and, especially their sons’ perpetuated ‘solo efforts’ and a rising general dissociation from her authority. Mun Hyöng-jin was eventually stripped of his international presidency and, accordingly, his claim for succession in March 2015 after having been sus-

17 하늘나라의 왕후가 되고, 이 나라의 왕후가 되고, 그 다음에 자기 조상들의 할머니가 되고, 자기 어머니가 되고, 자기 아내가 되고, 자기 딸이 되는 거예요.

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pended from office for more than a year. In his stead, Han appointed the hitherto hardly known Mun Sŏn-jin, who has thus been put into the position of Han's successor-in-waiting. As the International President, she is the first female Unificationist ever holding such powerful formal office.¹⁸ In February 2014, Han promulgated the 'Cheon Il Guk Constitution' (*Ch'ŏnilguk hŏnbŏp*; *CIGHB*) to consolidate her own leadership status and codify dynastic succession installing the Cheon Il Guk Supreme Council, whose chairperson must be from the Family of True Parents. The text, which gives supreme religious and organisational authority to Han, is intended to legally regulate the organisational structure and workflow of the FFWPU in the post-Foundation Day age. It also supplies an outline of main doctrinal tenets that already accommodate the cornerstones of Han's theological evolution. Whereas the preface to the (post-1992 editions of the) *WK* completely omits mentioning Han (and her role in discovering the 'Word of God'), the preamble of the *Constitution* stresses their joined achievements:¹⁹

God [...] sent the parents Mun Sŏn-myŏng and Han Hak-cha on this earth as Saviour of humanity, Messiah, Lord of the Second Advent, and True Parents. The True Parents of Heaven, Earth, and Humankind [...], Mun Sŏn-myŏng and Han Hak-cha, discovered the Word of God humanity has lost, proclaiming it to the whole world. They fulfilled the ideal of all religions and bequeathed God's true love, true life and true lineage, having them settled eternally at a cosmic level. [...] The True Parents through the providence of restoration have attained final unity [...]. (*CIGHB* Preamble).²⁰

18 The change of leadership engendered the hitherto most explosive schism in the UM. Supported by his brother Kuk-jin and several other prominent UM dignitaries, Mun Hyŏng-jin hived off his own congregation to form the World Peace and Unification Sanctuary headquartered in Newfoundland, Pennsylvania. He transferred the role of True Mother from Han to his wife, while attacking the former for being manipulated by evil, which led to her self-divinisation. He brands Han as 'harlot of Babylon,' and the FFWPU headquarters as a site of goddess worship. In his theology, Mun Hyŏng-jin employs a saliently apocalyptic tenor and generally resorts to a fundamentalist worldview. He frequently voices criticism towards 'feminist' developments in the UM under Han. Interestingly, this particular criticism is seconded by exponents of another major schismatic UM-related group, the Global Peace Federation led by the third son and former designated successor of Mun, Mun Hyŏn-jin (b. 1969).

19 Surprisingly, the post-Foundation Day editions of the *WK* (as of 2016) retain the original preface without mentioning Han's contribution. Contrary to that, because of the recent sales ban of Mun's *Selected Sermons* (*Mun Sŏn-myŏng sŏnsaeng malssŭm sŏnjip*), underhanded suspicion has been voiced by mainline Unificationists that this might have come directly from Han in order to start a revision of the entire corpus in the light of post-Foundation Day theological developments. Whether this will prove true or not, it does display a certain level of scepticism and chagrin among members concerning the UM leadership.

20 하나님은 연장된 오랜 복귀섭리역사 (復歸攝理歷史) 를 거쳐 문선명 (文鮮明) -한

In addition, through the *Constitution* (CIGHB §14), Han introduced a new set of central scriptures – the revised *Ch'önsönggyöng* (Heavenly Scripture, 2013), the *P'yönghwagyöng* (Scripture of Peace, 2013), and the *Ch'ambumogyöng* (True Parents' Scripture, 2015), all containing selected passages of speeches by Mun and, to a lesser extent, Han – relevant for the post-Foundation Day age, replacing the 'Eight Great Textbook Teaching Materials' (*8tae kyojae kyobon*) that had previously been assigned key canonical status by Mun (Pokorny forthcoming). The new scriptures, and in particular the *Ch'ambumogyöng*, articulate a much more egalitarian understanding of True Parents' relationship, also sacralising for the first time in writing a substantial corpus of words by Han. The decision to reshape the Unificationist canon in view of a new millenarian reckoning after Foundation Day led to much criticism and discontent in the movement, fuelling schismatic tendencies.

Foundation Day marked in many ways a turning point for the UM and Han. Prior to the proclamation of the inception of substantial Cheon Il Guk, which from then on were to gradually unfold to encompass the whole cosmos, Han and Mun (the latter qua spiritual being) 'performed' yet another blessing ceremony, believed to have ultimately completed their salvational transmutation following the 1960 and 2003 events. This final blessing ceremony, styled as 'God's Wedding' (*hananim'üi sönghonsik*), substantially merged together Han, Mun, and God. Post-Foundation Day Theology takes this as the final act of gender equalisation, the endpoint of Origin-Division-Union Action, and the 'divinisation' of humankind (thus far limited to True Parents).²¹ Furthermore, this unity between God and True Parents, and the ensuing dawn of substantial Cheon Il Guk, finally fulfilled the purpose of Creation *in nuce*. The 'Heavenly Father' therefore became the 'Heavenly Parent(s)' (*hanül pumonim*) (cf. Moon 2015), expressing the complete coalescence of gender complementarity (True Parents) into the one perfected object partner of God. The subject (Heavenly Parent[s]) and the object (True Parents paving the way for all of humanity) themselves form a divine union, rejoicing in mutual love and harmony. Post-Foundation Day Theology, which follows the doctrinal trajectory set (or at least approved) by Han, consequently, not only codified total gender equality but 'degendered' the godhead's perception by the faithful. Although on many previous occasions, Mun implicitly and explicitly voiced that providential history has arrived at the stage of gender equality, gender traditionalism kept pervading his overall teachings and mores until the

학자 (韓鶴子) 양위분을 인류의 구세주 · 메시아 · 재림주 · 참부모로 이 땅에 보내셨다. 천지인참부모님 (이하 '참부모님'이라 한다) 이신 문선명 · 한학자 양위분은 인류가 잃어버린 하나님의 말씀을 찾아 전 세계에 선포하시고, 모든 종교의 이상을 이루시어 하나님의 참사랑 · 참생명 · 참혈통을 영원히 천주적 (天宙的) 으로 정착시켜 상속해주셨다. [...] 참부모님은 복귀섭리를 통하여 최종일체 (最終一體) 를 이루시고 [...].

²¹ In the emic view, Han thus does not represent a successor to Mun, but through her both continue the course of True Parents.

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end. Accordingly, with a female leader now in place, many members saw the Age of Women having eventually come to reality, a claim that was all the more backed up by Mun Sŏn-jin's appointment. In the aftermath of Foundation Day, the UM leadership – also in order to antagonise schismatic attacks – marshalled passages in Mun's sermons that help support this theological turn, stressing Han's infallibility and rightful lead, but also her practical prowess. Whereas Mun is now frequently depicted as mostly a theoretician (something he could rarely be considered given his saliently practical nature), Han is credited as the one effectively putting theory into practice. Her providential contributions and qualities (a paragon of womanly virtue and pious and motherly commitment, facing persecution and hardship all her life) are systematised and emphatically communicated to the grassroots members, aligning them to carry on the millenarian task with Han at the vanguard. In this respect, shortly after Mun's funeral, a post-Foundation Day millenarian action plan was put forth under Han's guidance, tagged as Vision 2020 (*pijŏn 2020*), to bundle motivational resources once again towards a shared goal, that is, the *in extenso* solidification of substantial Cheon Il Guk. Naturally, Han perseveres with the millenarian strategy executed so resonantly by her late husband. Her theological empowerment can thus be seen as a corollary of a distinctive narrative set in motion by Mun to stress an increasing spiritual advancement of the Messiah, of which Han represents the one part still alive, in tune with millenarian progression. The latest addition to Han's identificatory evolution, being a further expression of her absolute equalisation with Mun, is her self-entitled status as God's Only-Begotten Daughter (*toksaengnyŏ*): "I, the True Mother sitting here, am God's Only-Begotten Daughter born six-thousand years ago; I have all the evidence here." (Han 2014).²² Other than previous 'spiritual promotions' such as God's Wedding, Han's position as Only-Begotten Daughter is not understood as the consequence of linear and cumulative spiritual achievements, but simply a new wording for a soteriological function assigned to her by God decades ago. Whether this is taken as a mere spiritual title divinely bestowed to her once her True Motherhood was sealed in 1960,²³ or an actual ontological state she was born with (or perhaps which she obtained upon arriving at the stage of True Mother) is not entirely clear. However, it does draw on – and this is exactly the cause for great debate and even division among Unificationists – the underlying notion of inborn sinlessness: "The conversion of lineage occurred when I was in my mother's womb" (*ibid.*).²⁴ Such would apparently go against pre-Foundation Day teachings, according to which Han realised sinlessness through

22 여기 앉은 참어머니는 6천년만에 탄생한 독생녀다 증거가 다 있다.

23 That is, Only-Begotten Daughter qua salvational link (as True Mother) between Heavenly Parent(s) and humankind; a unique female human being and God's elect who (together with her complementary part, the perfect male, i. e. Mun) consummated God's purpose of creation.

24 혈통전환 나는 모태부터다.

her union with Mun. A paradigmatic attempt by church theologians to accommodate this somehow is to explain that Han, like Mun, was in fact implanted sinlessness at a given point in her spiritual career – Mun when he accepted God’s millenarian request conveyed by Jesus in an epiphany in 1935, and Han when she was taken by Mun as True Mother – which then “extended backward to the past and justified God’s relationship with [her] from [her] birth or before [her] birth” (Wilson 2015). This latest aspect of Unification ‘Christology’ clearly challenges theological reasoning in the UM, leading to novel and reconstructive readings of core doctrinal elements (i. e., millenarian action that transcends time, anchoring its messianic momentum in the past).²⁵ With the introduction of the notion of Only-Begotten Daughter – referencing most prominently CSG II.1.26, p. 149 – Han not only removed the remaining ontological distinction vis-à-vis Mun,²⁶ but re-emphasised more than before the ‘gynocentric turn’ in Unification thought. In a resonating sermon in October 2015, Han maintained:

So the last two-thousand years of the history of Christianity were due to the revival of the Holy Ghost, and are, accordingly, a history of the Holy Spirit. What you need to know of what this means is that this was the foundation to search for the Only-Begotten Daughter. [...] Heaven’s providence is the providence to find the Only-Begotten Daughter. (Han 2015a).²⁷

Above all, the Only-Begotten Daughter concept is viewed by many as the most salient actualisation of the true spirit of this Age of Women; that is, the full emancipation of women at last, and the appreciation of their oft-neglected vital contribution to God’s providence. It is understood as the natural consequence of

25 In fact, for many members (and even more so schismatics) reconciling Han’s recent teachings with pre-Foundation Day thought through ‘retroactive sinlessness’ appears to be too artificial an approach. Critical voices mainly stress an increasing level of self-aggrandisement in Han’s rhetoric (and thus her theology), which at the same time relativises or downgrades the theological and salvational role and general contribution of Mun.

26 “When the Only-Begotten Son [i. e. Mun] comes, he cannot be alone. There has to be the Only-Begotten Daughter.” 독생자가 나왔는데 독생자 혼자서는 안 됩니다. 독생녀가 있어야 됩니다.

27 그래서 기독교 2천 년 역사는 성령의 부활로 인해서 성신 역사예요. 그 말은 무슨 말인가 하면, 독생녀를 찾아 나오는 기반이었다 하는 것을 알아야 돼요. [...] 그러나 하늘의 섭리는 독생녀를 찾아 나오는 섭리가 있었다는 거예요. Han’s sermon was published in the 2015 November issue of the group’s monthly *True Peace* (Han 2015b). However, the text is substantially edited (even more so – as is common in the UM – in its English translation) and some delicate wordings stressing Han’s soteriological championship at the expense of Mun’s status are removed. This shows that official UM theology tries to avoid communicating narratives that may too bluntly impact mainline thinking in this respect (i. e. ‘devaluing’ the role of Mun).

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Cheon Il Guk soteriological thought (the perfection of Origin-Division-Union Action) and post-Foundation Day theology (God's Wedding). Wilson (2015) puts it in a nutshell:

[I]t is wonderful that True Mother is declaring herself God's only begotten Daughter. It means she is emerging from Father's shadow, where admittedly she seemed to be living during most of her life. It is a victory for all womankind. It is a step on the road to establishing Cheon Il Guk, where man and woman can unite into one, reflecting fully the glory of God's masculinity and God's femininity in their own persons. That is what Cheon Il Guk is supposed to be all about.

5. Concluding Remarks

The self-elevating style of Han follows a distinct pattern set by Mun. Like in days past, it is upheld by the leadership's rhetoric – most prominently, in the person of Han's designated successor and current FFWPU international president, Mun Sŏn-jin (albeit at the expense of augmenting her own charisma). Critics of the 'feminist shift' in the UM blame the new theology and bearing (and, accordingly, implicitly or explicitly Han and the UM leadership) to go against Unificationist tradition and mainline thinking, distorting and diminishing the unique contribution of Mun. The majority of members, however, remain loyal to the shared cause and their leader(s), taking the current approach as keeping to Mun's vision and a token of a progressive and model religion that more than ever stands at the global forefront. Han's ubiquitous, yet untouchable, visibility and her internally uncontested lead are considered a natural continuation of the group's central (co-)messianic narrative. Mun is held to be ever-present with Han. Negating her (as, most notoriously, Mun Hyŏng-jin does) is perceived as trespassing a 'red line,' that is, the turning away from Mun and God's providence, which is akin to committing apostasy under the corrosive influence of evil forces (incidentally, the same line of argument is employed by Mun Hyŏng-jin).

Coping with a movement (and, to some extent, a theology) in a state of disarray following the passing of Mun, Han's extrovert strategy makes sense to an indifferent observer. Schismatic developments aside – which remain relatively small in terms of adherents, and are always to be expected in such a case (especially given previously existing tensions in the Mun family when it comes to the emergence of the 'Sanctuary Church') – Han dealt largely successful with the danger of organisational dissolution in the wake of a charismatic founder's death. She was able to fully redirect attention to herself, firmly consolidating her organisational power and theological authority, and thus perpetuating the messianic and millenarian narrative; that is, the vital basis of organisational (and doctrinal) self-legitimation. With Mun gone, Han crowned herself the providential mastermind single-handedly navigating through millenarian waters. This undoubtedly makes

her the culmination of female leadership in the Unificationist tradition, the ideal female leader from an emic perspective – ‘God’s Only-Begotten Daughter,’ so to speak. Whether the ‘feminising revolution’ carried forward so stridently by Han will have an impact upon future personnel decisions – surprisingly, top-ranked female dignitaries are still rare to be found – and established gender arrangements in the movement is to be seen. What is already noticeable concerning the latter, however, is an overall change of mind; a burgeoning sensibility and appreciation for the crucial contribution of women concerning kingdom-building, as well as a general feeling of self-empowerment among female devotees frequently communicated especially with a view to Han’s role.

It is unlikely that the theological tenor of Han will intensify further, for this would only jeopardise relative organisational stability and the current millenarian momentum. The late Mun is a fixed element in the Unificationist religious memory and parlance. Han already succeeded in closing up to him, even (occasionally) outperforming him in the discourse. What is needed next is to keep the routinisation of charisma intact; to put more focus on the theological preparation of Mun Sŏn-jin as the spiritual heir to ‘True Mother.’ This will indeed put Han to the test and eventually determine if the Age of Women will persist beyond her days.

Abbreviations

| | |
|--------------|---|
| <i>CBG</i> | <i>Ch’ambumogyŏng</i> |
| <i>CIGHB</i> | <i>Ch’ŏnilguk hŏnbŏp</i> |
| <i>CSG</i> | <i>Ch’ŏnsŏnggyŏng</i> |
| FFPWU | Family Federation for World Peace and Unification |
| HSAUWC | Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity |
| <i>NAF</i> | <i>New Age Frontiers</i> |
| UM | Unification Movement |
| UPF | Universal Peace Federation |
| <i>WK</i> | <i>Wŏlli kangnon</i> |

Glossary

| | |
|---------------|-----------|
| Cho Wŏn-mo | 조원모 (趙元模) |
| Ch’oe Wŏn-bok | 최원복 (崔元福) |
| Ch’oe Yŏn-a | 최연아 (崔妍娥) |
| Han Hak-cha | 한학자 (韓鶴子) |
| Hong Sun-ae | 홍순애 (洪順愛) |
| Kim Hyo-nam | 김효남 (金孝南) |
| Kim Yŏng-un | 김영운 (金永雲) |

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Mun Hun-suk 문훈숙 (文薰淑)
Mun Hŭng-jin 문흥진 (文興進)
Mun Hyo-jin 문효진 (文孝進)
Mun Hyŏn-jin 문현진 (文顯進)
Mun Hyŏng-jin 문형진 (文亨進)
Mun Nan-yŏng 문난영 (文蘭英)
Mun Sŏn-jin 문선진 (文善進)
Mun Sŏn-myŏng 문선명 (文鮮明)
Sŏk Chun-ho 석준호 (石俊渙)
Yu Hyo-wŏn 유효원 (劉孝元)
3sidae'üi ömöni 3시대 (時代) 의어머니
8tae kyojae kyobon 8대교재교본 (大教材教本)
Asia p'yŏnghwa yŏsŏng yŏnhap 아시아 평화여성연합 (平和女性聯合)
chae 2kyoju 제 (第) 2교주 (教主)
chaerimju 재림주 (再臨主)
chŏngbunhap chagyong 정분합작용 (正分合作用)
chuch'e 주체 (主體)
ch'am pumonim kajŏng 참부모 (父母) 님가정 (家庭)
ch'am ömönim 참어머님
ch'am pubu 참부부 (夫婦)
Ch'ambumogyŏng 참부모경 (父母經)
ch'önilguk 천일국 (天一國)
Ch'önilguk hŏnbŏp 천일국헌법 (天一國憲法)
Ch'öngp'yŏng 청평 (淸平)
ch'önilguk ch'oego wiwŏnhoe 천일국최고위원회 (天一國最高委員會)
ch'önjiin ch'am pumo 천지인참부모 (天地人참父母)
Ch'önju Ch'öngp'yŏng suryŏnwŏn 천주청평수련원 (天宙淸平修鍊苑)
Ch'önsŏnggyŏng 천성경 (天聖經)
hananim 하나님
hananim'üi hyölt'ong 하나님의혈통 (血統)
hananim'üi sŏnghonsik 하나님의성혼식 (成婚式)
hanül pumonim 하늘부모 (父母) 님
hunmonim 훈모 (訓母) 님
Kap'yŏng 가평 (加平)
kiwŏnjŏl 기원절 (基元節; before: 起源節)
kuseju 구세주 (救世主)
Kyŏnggi 경기 (京畿)
manyu wöllyök 만유원력 (萬有原力)
mesia 메시아
Mun Sŏn-myŏng sŏnsaeng malssŏm sŏnjip 문선명선생 (文鮮明先生) 말씀선집 (選集)
öriyang honin [chanch'i] 어린양 (羊) 혼인 (婚姻) [잔치]
pijŏn 2020 비전2020
P'yŏnghwagyŏng 평화경 (平和經)

p'yŏnghwa'ui wang 평화 (平和) 의왕 (王)
 sawi kidae 사위기대 (四位基臺)
 Segye Kidokkyo T'ongil Sillyŏng Hyŏphoe 세계기독교통일신령협회 (世界基督教
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 庭聯合)
 Segye p'yŏnghwa yŏsŏngyŏnhap 세계평화여성연합 (世界平和女性聯合)
 sŏnghwa 성화 (聖和)
 susu chagyong 수수작용 (授受作用)
 sŭnghwa 승화 (昇華)
 taemonim 대모 (大母) 님
 taesang 대상 (對象)
 toksaengnyŏ 독생녀 (獨生女)
 Wŏlli haesŏl 원리해설 (原理解說)
 Wŏlli kangnon 원리강론 (原理講論)
 yáng 陽
 yīn 陰
 yŏsŏng sidae 여성시대 (女性時代)

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