

The Chung Pyung Providence - Part Two: Eyes Wide Open

Michael Downey
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*Hyo Nam Kim -- Dae Mo Nim -- Hoon Mo Nim
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In 1999 Father called all State Leaders to a meeting in Kodiak, Alaska. He also called leaders from Japan to come. He made trinities with one Korean one Japanese and one American leader and ordered a thirty day exchange program between the American and Japanese leaders. Father talked to us about people from the three nations making one heart and even living together. It was a beautiful ideal.

At that time I was the state leader of Washington State and was sent to Miazaki Japan. Wow!!! My eyes were opened.

Compared to the American church organization

the Japanese organization was a much bigger well-oiled machine. They treated us, what passed for the leadership of the US church, like VIPs. I was toured around in the back seat of a limousine, was taken to expensive restaurants for most of my meals and given pocket money with no receipts required. I sat in on staff meetings that were held twice a day and was provided with an interpreter. I was taken to various local groups where I stood up and testified to large assemblies of members. They hung on my every word. It was really heady stuff.

Of course we all knew that Japan was the Eve nation in the providence and was responsible to raise the funds that were required to save the world. Everyone had heard testimonies of the hard working sacrificial members who were raising blood money. We tasted a fraction of this culture and life style on MFT.

The top leaders seemed to be up front when explaining their operation. When we arrived in Tokyo we went as a group to the headquarters and were briefed on the operation. The vice president of the church spoke to us in detail about how they raised funds. It went like this. Japan is a Buddhist country and Buddhist beliefs permeate the culture and form the basis for how people think. When Japanese people are un- happy or meet difficulty and misfortune they believe that the cause is that their ancestors did evil things and the solution is to resolve those evil deeds by doing good deeds today. Our members contacted people and built a network. They counseled their contacts repeatedly about how to solve their un-happy circumstances. They offered them an array of products that had spiritual properties. If they bought/donated money their ancestor's misdeeds would be erased and they would be happy. The products ranged from ginseng tea, personal stamps to marble vases, temples and statues of the Buddha. Their monthly, weekly, daily and even hourly goals were huge.

At the regional headquarters in Miazaki I was able to observe firsthand how they managed the operation. It looked nothing like the family, movement or church that I had joined. The headquarters building was an eight story mixed use building with some living space, offices and meeting rooms. In the main hall where large meetings were held, there was a low stage with an altar on which were placed pictures of True Parents, Heung Jin Nim, Dae Mo Nim, the photo of True Mother's mother, and the Gulfstream jet that they were determined to buy for True Parents. Every meeting began by bowing to the altar and reciting the Family Pledge in Korean. Staff meetings consisted of various leaders reporting on their goals and the daily efforts of the members to meet their goals. There was a heavy emphasis on testimonies of the miraculous, often last minute, work of the spirit world to make a goal. Same as MFT only it was on a much bigger scale. I saw nothing of the personal life of leaders or members.

There was some nominal witnessing effort from a video center that I visited. I spent one day fundraising with small donation products going door to door. I was told this kind of activity was only used for training younger members. The main effort was the marble vase donation activity. One day I was taken to visit a Buddhist group that was waiting for the return of the Buddha. They had accepted True Father as the returned Buddha. They were actually a parallel movement that also raised funds. They were absolutely Buddhists and had nothing to do with what I thought of as the Judeo-Christian foundations of the Unification Movement. Probably many members were aware of these activities in Japan and I was, vaguely, as well but to see it drove home the huge cultural gap that existed in the movement.

I later discovered that his group was not a main line Buddhist group but was a group that liberally mixed Buddhism, shamanism and animism. The founder was a Japanese woman psychic who did healing and fortune telling in her native Hokkaido. She merged her group and a local stone worshipping group with the Unification Church. They recognized Moon Sun Myung as the returned Buddha.

Next we moved as a group to Korea to meet the Korean third of our trinity. Our time in Korea was a lot shorter than in Japan. The first activity was a meeting with True Parents at the Hannam Dong Residence. Father sent us off on a three day bus trip to visit historic and cultural places around Korea including mountains, museums and holy places. Of course we visited a Dae Mo Nim Museum, the old Headquarters Church in Chum Pa Dong and the holy places in Busan where True Parents wrote the Principle and began the church. It seemed to me that Unification Church culture fit almost seamlessly with Korean culture.

One day we visited Kyung Ju, the capital of the ancient kingdom of Shilla. Bul Kook Sa, Buddhist nation temple, is a huge temple complex with prayer halls, lecture halls and pagodas. I wanted to know who built it. I asked several people and got the standard answer. It was built by the king in filial devotion to his parents. But I didn't want to know who commissioned or ordered it built, I wanted to know who actually built it with their hands and backs. Finally I learned it was built with corvee labor, that is required or forced, labor of the common people.

On the very next day after seeing the temple at Kyung Ju we visited the Chung Pyung training center. The Chung Pyung providence was in full swing at that time. Gone were the tents and porta potties. Built into the mountain side were plazas, a hospital, a prayer hall, a sauna bath house and a three story lecture hall. The grounds were immaculately landscaped. All was new and reeked of new and unlimited money. When I saw the pagoda I immediately made the connection to Bul Kook Sa. It seemed like a new and improved version of the old temple complex at Kyung Ju. I had the same question; who built this. Obviously there were various architects and contractors involved but who paid for it? Of course the money came from members donating money to liberate their ancestors. It was not corvee labor, where common people were compelled to turn over a portion of their harvests or time for labor under pain of imprisonment or death. There was a different kind of compulsion in play.

The Japanese church had the most members and they were already culturally primed to spend big time to liberate their ancestors. It was a revelation to me and I decided that I would not be a part of it. How about my ancestors? Will they rot in hell because of my faithfulness? After careful considerations I thought not. After all, where is the spirit world anyway? It's not up there some place as people believed in the past or pilots, astronauts or astronomers would have seen it. If an unseen incorporeal world exists than it must exist in my own mind. Therefore ancestors must inhabit a place in my own mind. Communication or interaction with them must be within myself. Thoughts, feelings and even compulsion exist and are often buried in my subconscious mind. Unrecognized and uncontrolled they become the cause of behaviors, good and bad. Behaviors are powerfully passed down to the next generation. If I recognize such bad impulse, resist them and thus not repeat bad behavior have I not broken the cycle and 'liberated the ancestor' who passed it down to me. although it required a lot more self awareness, effort on my part and time it was surely more legitimate than paying money to liberate my ancestors. I was sure this was right for me and I determined that I would not be donating money for someone else to do what I could and do myself.

Koreans are nothing if not a religious folk. Many religions that originated in other places have taken root in Korea, including Christianity, Buddhism, Taoism and Confucianism. They are all believed and practiced in unique Korean forms until today. The indigenous religions of Korea of totemism, animism and shamanism are the oldest forms of belief and practice. They arrived on the peninsula with the people who migrated from Siberia before the dawn of time. The uniqueness of the Korean religious experience is that many of these forms have mixed together to the extent that it is hard to separate one from another.

Shamanism as practiced in Korea can be traced to forms common in Siberia and Manchuria. There is no Korean word for Shamanism in the Korean language. Instead the derogatory word mi shin is used. This is the same word used for superstition. Female shamanists are called moo dang and their practice is called mooism. Male shamans are called Bak soo.

Shamanism is not an organized religion with a theology, organization or ordained clergy. In fact it is not even recognized as a religion in Korea. Instead it is made up of freelance practitioners. The belief system and the moo dang's practice is deeply embedded in Korean village life. When folks move to the cities they try to leave village superstitions behind but they pop up in unexpected ways.

For those who have eyes to see, shamanism and its practice is everywhere in Korea. If you go into almost any small business or shop and look above the entrance door you will see a dried whole Pollock. You may also see various stickers with good luck words in Sanskrit. At the formal opening of the concern they will have a ceremony with food drink and a pig's head. Guests of course stuff money in the pig's mouth for good fortune. In any neighborhood you will find a residence with a flag pole flying both a red flag and a flag with the Buddhist inverted swastika. When I asked folks what these were I got different answers. Some said they were Buddhist temples and others said they were fortune tellers. Later I found that they were both right. There are three main Buddhist orders in Korea. They are organized and hierarchical. They control orthodoxy and own the big temples. The big orders would disavow the small urban centers. They aren't really Buddhists. They are fortune tellers masquerading as monks.

At other times I encountered unorthodox monks and nuns in Buddhist garb wandering around. It was surprising that they often smoked and drank alcohol. When I talked with them they gave off a very different vibe than any monk I had conversed within the past. For a long time I wondered what was up with this. Not long ago I learned what was behind this. Shamanism is not legal in Korea. They can't own property or operate like other religions. In the world of religion they are an underclass. To avoid persecution shamans often have disguised themselves as Buddhist monks and nuns, shaving their heads and wearing the gray robes. They have also disguised shamanist shrines to look like Buddhist temples on the outside.

These shamans make their living by telling fortunes, selling amulets to attract good luck and to ward off evil and when necessary, contact, communicate with and are mounted by spirits. When they are mounted they find the problem in the spirit world and, for the right price, placate the offending spirit. The kut or exorcism ceremony is elaborate, colorful and expensive. Blowing smoke, spitting alcohol, twirling sharp knives, walking on the knives and conveying the spirit's message are all a part of the kut.

Today most Koreans will try to distance themselves from the past and consider such rituals as quaint. But many still go to fortune tellers and even pay for good luck charms and to buy new more fortunate names. It is impossible to overestimate the continued impact of the old religion on Koreans. The old ways often blend seamlessly with more modern religious beliefs. As a part of the bus tour, one day we visited the Chung Pyung training center. The Chung Pyung providence was in full swing at that time. I had been to a 40 day workshop three years earlier and was surprised at the words used to describe the activities of Kim Hyo Nam. Fraud infers that she intentionally set out to deceive folks. I don't think that is true. I'm sure she believes in what she is doing. I can best describe her as a moodang. Without understanding Korean shamanism and how deep it runs in the Korean soul we can't know who this woman is. Like any human endeavor it is difficult to know how things will end up at the beginning. Among the many spiritual mediums active at that time True Father selected her. I was present at East Garden when True Father questioned her and another Mrs. Kim about their activities. He asked those assembled if we believed her and how much we believed her.

It was after this that members were told to stop channeling spirits and all such activities had to be vetted by Kim Ho Nam. I believe that True Father recognized the situation for what it was. Members wanted or needed such activities and to minimize confusion chose one moodang. In a sense, we asked for it and we got it. It was clear to me that True Father's endorsement of Kim Hyo Nam was not 100%.

She tapped into the Japanese need for such activities and was able to mobilize a lot of money. It is my contention that the same money could have been mobilized in a different way without the side effects of slipping back into superstition and opening the door to financial corruption.