[page 1**]**

**Introduction**

Prior to 1945 the Koreans suffered through a long period of foreign domination, during which religious groups were regimented and occasionally suppressed. But with the liberation of the country at the end of World War II freedom of religion was officially guaranteed. At this time a multitude of religious sects sprang up “like mushrooms after the rain.”

Many of the most prominent of these newly risen faiths, such as Ch’ondogyo 天道敎 (The Religion of the Heavenly Way) and certain of the Jingsan-gyo 甑山敎(The Religion of Jingsan) sects, were revitalized survivals of a bygone age. Others, such as T’ong-il kyohoe 統一敎會 (The Unification Church) and Chondogwan 傳道舘(The Proselyting Hall—popularly known as “The Olive Tree Church”) were novel and dynamic Korean-originated quasi-Christian movements.

As the studies of this volume indicate, these New Religions represent a vigorous force in Korean society today. While membership figures released by these groups are no doubt exaggerated, their popular following is significantly large. In their energetic effort to fulfill the needs of Korea’s changing social and intellectual world, and to address themselves to the anxieties and aspirations of the people, they already pose a challenge to the established, conventional faiths.

The term “New Religions” is widely accepted by journalists in Japan, America, and Europe, and even by the academicians of those areas. But this term is imprecise and troublesome in Korea, where these religions are not all of the same parcel. They differ decidedly on many points. There is at least a half a century of distance between the sects of the remote Kyeryong-san 鷄龍山 basin centered at Sindonae 新都內 in South Ch’ungch’ong province and the internationally-minded T’ongil church, with its headquarters in downtown Seoul. Nevertheless, all of these New Religions have emerged from a common [page 2**]** socio-ideological tradition; and they have been generated and shaped by the sudden impingement of the same kinds of outside forces. Thus their well-springs of action, and their problems, are much the same. And certain hallmarks are common to them all.

First, the New Religions of Korea are prominently syncretistic in nature. Like much else in the cultural life of this peninsula, the various sects and patterns of religion are a mixture of things. Ancestor worship and Buddhism, Taoism, Confucian ethics, magic, divination, geomancy, astrology, fetishism, and the doctrines of Christianity are joined together in strange and varying degrees of emphasis and harmony.

Ch’ondogyo (as an example) is obviously an agglomoration of things of disparate origin, originally known as Tonghak 東學 (Eastern Learning). Founder Ch’oe Che-u 崔濟愚 allegedly received heavenly manifestations in 1860 commissioning him to establish a spiritual way of life. In part the Tonghak teachings were a reaction against Sohak 西學 (Western Learning), a euphemism for Western philosophy, particularly Catholic Christianity, which was making strong incursions in Korea at the time. As Benjamin Weems explains in his book on Ch’ondogyo, Ch’oe Che-u combined basic principles of Confucianism, Buddhism, Taoism, Christianity and Shamanism. From Confucianism, he took the concept of the five social relationships; from Buddhism, the concept of heart cleansing; and from Taoism the law of cleansing the body from natural and moral filth. He also drew upon organizational and ritualistic elements in Roman Catholicism; and he was influenced by what is called Ch’am-wisol 讖緯說(The Theory of Interpretations of Omens). This theory, a combination of spirit worship and shamanism on the one hand and the pseudo-scientific practices of geomancy on the other, had come to exert an appreciable influence on the Korean mind. Also, the Tonghak use of talismans and incantations has survived in present-day Ch’ondogyo, and has influenced the ritual practices of the Jingsan-gyo faiths.

Although Ch’ondogyo doctrines on deity have been reputedly influenced by Catholicism, the idea of the incarnation of God in men and of discovering the divine within human beings [page 3**]** through self-cultivation and prayer is decidedly neo-Confucian and Buddhist in origin.

Another example is Sangjegyo 上帝敎, or the Jingsangyo system, where there are the five ethical principles of Confucianism; spiritual enlightenment and cause and effect from Budhism; positive and negative theories from Chinese philosophy; and ideas of Sunday worship from Christianity.

The prophecy of a new capital in Sindonae derives from a variety of influences, but particularly from the geographical features of Feng shui (in Korea, p’ungsu 風水), a component of Taoism—an idea strongly rooted among the Korean people.

Kwansonggyo 關聖敎 reputedly worships the ancient Chinese general Kwan-u 關羽, a man whose reputation is kept bright in Korea through the widespread popularity of the Chinese novel Samgukji 三國誌 in which he is a principal hero. In company with Professor Lee Kang-o, I visited the shrine center of this sect in Kyeryongsan. First we entered a building containing a giant Bunyan-like statue of the general with outstretched arms. Then we were shown the second story of an adjacent shrine building, in which five large portraits were prominently displayed. The center painting, much larger than rest, the portrayed the god Hananim. Flanking him on the right were the Buddha and Jesus (wearing rubber komusins), and on the left, Confucius and Laotzu. All the bases were covered. A representation of every known god was somewhere to be found.

And this in not an isolated case. It is a matter of course in the Kyeryongsan area and in Kimje county 金堤郡 of north Cholla province for the various temples to contain groups of statues and portraits situated side by side, ranging from Tan’gun 檀君, the mythical founder of Korea (who is an object of worship of religious groups throughout Korea), the Maitreya Buddha (known in Korea as Miruk) to An Chung-kun 安重根, the Korean nationalist who was put to death by the Japanese for having assassinated I to Horibumi at Harbin in 1909.

A graphic illustration of religious syncretism is Ilsimgyo 一心敎. This curious sect, which was founded by Kang Tae-song 姜大成, was once discredited by the government and has changed its name since Choi Jai-sok conducted his survey of Sindonae. [page 4**]** It is known today as Yudo 儒려. Its headquarters are at Nam-won 南原, in north Cholla province, a town much better known as the setting for Korea’s favorite romantic Yi dynasty story, Ch’unhyang chon 春香傳.

In May of 1967 I was invited to attend a national convention of this Yudo faith, the only foreigner ever so permitted. The program started at 2:00 a.m. in a simple courtyard situated near a remote canyon. About one hundred and fifty members were assembled in seated positions upon the ground. The men wore topknots and horsehair hats, the boys under 21 years of age wore long queues reaching down to their waists, as did all the females. The congregation chanted songs in unison, sometimes reaching a fervent emotional pitch, calling upon heaven (ch’on, 天) and earth (chi, 地), the mountain god (san sin, 山神), and the dragon spirit (yong sin, 龍神). They sought for the blessing of the spirits of all mountains in every province of Korea, as well as the Mountain Spirits of China, England, America, Russia, India, France, and the Western countries, and every land under heaven. They rededicated themselves to morality and virtue; to the practice of the way of heaven (haeng do ch’on 行道天), the practice of the way of man (haeng do in 行追人), the practice of the way of the spirits (haeng do yong 行追靈) and to the practice of the way of god (haeng do sin 行道神). They reaffirmed their belief in the ethics of Confucianism, with much bowing and prayer before the portrait of Kang Taesong. After a silent procession to the founder’s grave, and a moment of devotion there, we returned to the courtyard. Then came the big surprise. The presiding officer asked me if I believed in the second coming of Christ, and if I would like to meet Jesus before the sun came up. When I replied that this would prove to be a very invigorating experience, I was ushered into the presence of a young Korean gentleman who acknowledged himself as a reincarnation of the historical Nazarene.

One last observation on the subject of syncretism. Shamanism is the primitive ethos of the Korean people. It is the basic instinct of the masses, especially in the countryside. All Korean religious ideas and ceremonies are influenced by it, and at some point coalesce with it. All successul religious movements in Korean history have drawn upon strong shamanistic [page 5**]** underpinnings. And such is certainly true of the New Religions.

A basic feature of shamanism (which has assimilated much from Buddhism, and vice-versa) is the medium, the Mudang 巫堂 or Paksu 박수. By means of incantations, secret formulas and trances, this person performs miraculous feats and insures good fortune. He (or she) is capable of influencing the spirits and assimilating their powers and personality. He is infused with supernatural enlightenment. Thus shamanism can join with Buddhism (in the Miruk and Yongwhagyo 龍華敎 sects) and transform Kang Jingsan into the Maitreya Buddha of the Kumsan temple 金山寺, where he is now an object of worship. Or in the Zen (called Son, 禪 in Korea) influenced sects of Bochongyo 普天敎, Samdoggyo 三德敎, and Bohwagyo 普化敎, Jingsan can become the Lord of the Nine Heavens. And more to the point, his three wives could commune with him after his decease, and themselves become instruments of divine power.

The Tong-il church and Chondogwan obviously contain the trappings and doctrines of Christianity, but their life blood is the spirit of shamanism. Mun Son-myong 文鮮明, founder of Tong-il, has taken Jesus’ place in the Holy Trinity, ana his bride is the holy spirit. He is the great mediator between the people and the awesome powers of the spirit world. He assimiliates the divine. And in the Tong-il sect, witches and fortune-tellers are much respected because they testify of who Mun really is.

Similarly, Pak T’ae-son 朴泰善 is filled with magic and holy fire. He is an immortal Olive Tree, endowed with special insight from God. He has power to cure all sickness. The faithful may be healed even by drinking the water from his bath.

A second feature of the New Religions is their appeal to national consciousness. Jingsan-gyo and Ch’ondogyo, as lineal descendants of the Tonghak, have inherited a tradition of socio-political concern. Among the former it is now mainly a matter of slogans, wistful references to history, and the hope of fulfillment of the ancient prophecy that the Kyeryongsan basin will one day become a great national capital. But in Ch’ondogyo, [page 6**]** under the new leadership of Ch’oe Dok-sin 崔德新, a forward-looking “New People’s Movement” has been launched with political overtones. Ch’oe (he spells it Choi) who resigned as Korean Ambassador to West Germany in September of 1967 in order to become the supreme leader of Ch’ondogyo, is an urbane, personable, and highly educated man (he speaks Chinese, English, French and German), who is now attempting to attract young people into the movement and to generate a spiritual force pertinent to the needs of a new Korea.

Ch’oe’s favorite mentor is Son Pyong-hi 孫秉熙, the third president, who took leadership in 1894 at the time of the abortion of the Tonghak Rebellion, and who is known throughout Korea as the first signer of the famous 1919 Declaration of Independence.

These are promising days for the Ch’ondogyo leadership. Their group is now realizing one of its most cherished goals: the government ana the people are beginning to recognize their socio-political contributions to the national development of the country. In 1962 the people of south Cholla province built and dedicated a statue of Chon Pong-jun 全琫準 at Kobu 古阜 in recognition of his leadership in the Tonghak movement; on the hundredth anniversary of the founding of the religion in 1964 a statue of Ch’oe Che-u was erected at Talsong park in Taegu; and in 1966 the government erected a statue of Son Pyong-hi in Pagoda park in Seoul, saying for the first time that the Tonghak were not rebels but leaders of a people’s revolution.

The most effusive, ethnocentric nationalism preached in the name of religion in Korea today does not surround a logical choice like Tan’gun, but centers upon Park T’ae-son. In the Olive Tree movement Korea is the most highly honored country of the world because it has produced the Lord of the Second Advent (there is something in this that reminds me of the prophet Nichiren’s trenchant declaration: “I am the pillar of Japan!”) The faithful are called upon to view Korea as the promised land, for as Jesus was sacrificed on the altar of the Jewish nation, so the Lord of the Second Advent (Elder Park) [page 7**]** will be a cosmic sacrifice, and Korea the universal altar. Korea, once forlorn and insignificant, will now become the ideal fatherland of mankind.

Physical Utopia is the ultimate aim of all of Korea’s New Religions, with the possible exception of Ch’ondogyo, where there is relatively little interest in programs of economic betterment. From one point of view, these religious groups can be regarded as indigenous sources undergoing sudden socio-economic change due to the imposition of a variety of outside influences. Thus Felix Moos has characterized them, and from this vantage point they will no doubt provde challenging and useful insights into the process of culture change, as he has suggested.

The numerous sects seek to transform this uneasy world of the present into an ideal world. The government’s impressive strides in economic change have tended to strengthen the desire and expectation of change among the members of these faiths. But even before the present government came to power, there was much imaginative interest in what that ideal world might embrace. It was already projected that ultimatedly the sun and moon will be changed so that the extremes of heat and cold will become moderate. Eventually gods and men will communicate with each other freely, while men will live in health to an average span of 800 years without disease. All cultural phenomenon will be renewed. No poverty or social classes will exist, and the thoughts of all men will be uniform. All the world will become one true family. People will be governed by God and men will be able to fly upon the clouds. They will be able to see the past, present, and future without moving.

The only thoroughly organized and conscious effort to build paradise on earth has been conceived by Pak T’aeson, although T’ong-il and others are also busily engaged. Pak’s Christian Towns, with their multiplicity of Zion-brand products, and their great variety of industrial, manufacturing and educational activities, have produced a plethora of market goods known and used throughout Korea today. Few believe that Pak [page 8**]** will eradicate hardship and poverty, or bring millennial peace, even within the limits of his own communities, but his socioeconomic experiments have made impressive gains, and their impact upon the country’s life is visibly felt.

\* \* \* \*

The five studies appearing in this journal were prepared by recognized Korean and foreign specialists. They have all had opportunity to do work in the field. Thanks to their combined efforts, this pilot English language survey of Korea’s New Religions has been made possible. As editor, my work has been confined primarily to getting the two studies on Jingsan-gyo and Sindonae, written originally in Korean, into acceptable English language form. The other studies appear as submitted by their authors. Choi Syn-duk’s article was originally presented as a lecture before the Royal Asiatic Society in Seoul.

*Felix Moos* is an Associate Professor of Anthropology and the Associate Chairman of the Department of Anthropology of the University of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas. Professor Moos was born in Germany, where he received his primary education. He studied for a short time in Luson, Switzerland, after the Second World War; came to America in 1949, and was sent to Korea (including Pyongyang) as a GI during the war. He later received his B.A. at the University of Cincinatti in Ohio, then went to the University of Washington in Seattle, where he received his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees specializing in Social Anthropology. Between 1958 and 1960 he studied at the University, of Tokyo as a Fulbright Scholar. He has been a consultant to the Agency for International Development, USOM Korea, each summer since 1964.

*Lee Kang-o* (李康五) is an Assistant Professor in the College of Letters and Science at Chonbuk University in Chonju. He was educated in Korea, where he graduated from Chonbuk University with a B.A. in philosophy in 1955, and received his M.A. in the same field in 1957. Professor Lee has spent many years of research in the field of Korean folklore and native religion. [page 9**]**

His copious notes, photographs, drawings, and manuscripts constitute the most comprehensive collection of materials on Korean indigenous religion now in existence. His article, in slightly revised form, originally appeared in Korean in *Non-munjip* (Commemoration Theses), Volume II, Chonpuk National University, Chonju, pages 113-162.

*Choi Jai-sok* (Ch’oe Chae-sok 崔在錫) recieved his B.A. and M.A. degrees from Seoul National University in 1935 and 1956 respectively. He has taught at Ewha, Chung’ang, and Korea Universities, at the last of which he was an Associate Professor of Sociology in 1966. During 1967 he studied at Harvard University as a visiting scholar, and also presented a paper before the 27th International Congress of Orientalists at Ann Arbor entitled “The Patrilineal Descent Group in Korea and its Function.” Professor Choi has writeen two books, *Korean Social Character*, and *A Study of the Korean Family*, and more than a score of his scholarly articles have appeared in the academic journals. His study of Sindonae originally appeared in Korean in Asia Tongu (亞細亞研究)，The Journal of Asiatic Studies, Korea University, Number I, June 1950, pages 143-178) .

*Benjamin B. Weems* was born in Kaesong, Korea, of American-born missionary parents. He has had many years of experience in Korea and is best known for his monographic work on Ch’ondogyo, Reform, Rebellion and the Heavenly Way, published in 1964 by the Association for Asian Studies. Mr. Weems received his B.A from Duke University in 1935 and an M.A. in Education in 1939 from the same institution. He received his M.A. from Georgetown in International Relations in 1955. Mr. Weems has a very productive background in government work as an analyst and writer, and is at present Assistant Program Officer-Economist, Agency for International Development, USOM, Korea.

*Choi Syn-cuk* (Ch’oe Sin-dok, 崔信德) is an Associate Professor of Sociology at Ewha Women’s University in Seoul. She received her undergraduate education in Korea at Ewha and did graduate work in social science at the University of Chicago where she received an M.A. degree in 1957. After her return [page 10**]** she served as Advisor in the Education Division of USOM, and in 1961 accepted an assistant professorship at Tanguk University. In 1963 she joined the faculty of Ewha University. Professor Choi has written books and reports on Korean-American subjects and on the dating attitudes of Korean college students. She is now engaged in an anthropological study of Korean village life. She was once an active member of the Tong-il church and was closely associated with Mun Son-myong.