

Tenchi Seikyō A Messianic Buddhist Cult

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Tenchi Seikyō is a small New Religion in Japan that has converged with the Unification Movement of Rev. Sun Myung Moon. This paper presents the history and nature of Tenchi Seikyō, describes the life of its founder, Kawase Kayo, and outlines Tenchi Seikyō's organization, beliefs, and practices. It also discusses the symbiotic relationship between Tenchi Seikyō and the Unification Movement (Jpn. Tōitsu Undō), and the reasons for the two organizations to develop such a relationship.

TENCHI SEIKYŌ 天地正教 (True teachings of heaven and earth) is a small "new" New Religion (*shinshinshūkyō* 新新宗教) that seems at first glance to be a rather ordinary part of today's Japanese religious milieu. With approximately 111,000 members in seventy-three local centers,¹ its object of worship is a simple, pure white marble statue of the Seated Maitreya (Miroku Bosatsu 弥勒菩薩), the future Buddha. Like other New Religions in Japan it focuses on the spiritual causes of illness, tragedy, and general human discord (HATAKEYAMA 1992). What makes this group remarkable is that it is the product of the clandestine convergence of two seemingly distant religious traditions: traditional Japanese folk Buddhism and the Christian messianism of Rev. Sun Myung Moon's Unification Movement (*tōitsu undō* 統一運動).² Founded by Kawase Kayo 川瀬カヨ, a charismatic spiritual medium and

¹ Membership counts for religious groups are notoriously unreliable because the groups include in their lists every person who attends even one of their services.

² The Unification Movement of Japan (hereafter Tōitsu Undō) includes the Unification Church of Japan (Tōitsu Kyōkai 統一協会) and all business, political, and social organizations that have been started by church members to promote the aims of the church. Many of the participants in the Unification Movement have not accepted Rev. Moon as the Messiah (or are not even aware of the connection between their organization and the church), whereas all Unification Church members have and say the complete church pledge as a sign of their allegiance.

a secret member of the Tōitsu Kyōkai, this unassuming Miroku cult may be the newest chapter in the story of religious syncretism (AKAHATA 1990).³ A delineation of the history and nature of Tenchi Seikyō is no simple matter, though, for it epitomizes the controversy for which Moon and his worldwide movement are so widely known.

Any discussion of how and why the Unification Movement gave rise to this messianic Buddhist group must take account of the following three factors:

1. Kawase Kayo and other Tōitsu Kyōkai members are attracted to Moon because they recognize him as the world savior expected by *all* religions and because of his supposed powers to control the spiritual world.
2. Tōitsu Kyōkai needed a more direct fund-raising and witnessing approach within a predominantly Buddhist country.
3. Tenchi Seikyō reflects and expresses spiritualist beliefs and practices already prevalent throughout the movement in Japan.

This paper will examine these factors in the context of the Unification Movement, Kawase Kayo's life, and Tenchi Seikyō's organization, beliefs, and practices. The reader should then be in a better position to understand that, though the creation and operation of Tenchi Seikyō is not without serious ethical problems, its development is viewed by Unificationists as a suitable means to aid the Japanese in achieving salvation.

Moon as World Savior and Shaman

Though the Unification Church (The Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity [H.S.A. U.W.C.]) has persistently sought recognition (even in Japan) as a Christian Church, it is certainly no stranger to syncretism. As James BECKFORD notes,

Controversy rages in some circles over the relative contribution of Christian and non-Christian components to Unificationist thought, but there is no doubt about the general influence of Korean shamanism, Taoist philosophy, Confucianism, and Buddhism over Moon's unique blend of traditions. Equally there can be no doubt about the Unification Church's aspiration to act as the solvent of religious differences and as the catalyst of universal religious harmony.

(1985, p. 44)

³ Tōitsu Kyōkai leaders deny any relationship between their organization and Tenchi Seikyō.

The syncretic tendencies of Unificationism should come as no surprise, given its origins in a country where Buddhism and Shamanism have deep historical roots and where religious exclusivism is not strong. Let us see how this syncretism operates in two of the roles commonly attributed to Moon—that of world savior, and that of shaman. I draw largely from the *Divine Principle*, a book that lays out the central teachings of the Unification Church.

World Savior. Concerning Moon in his role of the coming world savior, the *Divine Principle* states:

Naturally, the Lord of the Second Advent [believed by Unificationists to be Moon], who comes as the central figure of Christianity, will also play the role of Buddha, whom Buddhists believe will come again, as well as the role of the “True Man” whose appearance Confucianists anticipate, and “Chung Do Ryung” (“Herald of the Righteous Way”), whom many Koreans expect to come. In addition, he will also play the role of the central figure whom all other religions await.

(*D. P.* 1973, p. 188)

In the minds of Unificationists, this passage alone is sufficient to legitimize the establishment of a Unification Buddhist sect, be it only as a heuristic measure. Since the spirit of God’s Providence is believed to flow through the Judeo-Christian-Unification traditions, all Unification Movement members must ultimately come to accept the Unification ideal as the greatest truth. In other words, Buddhism is fine as long as it leads the believer to the Messiah (Moon), but its practice must eventually be superseded.

In addition, Unificationists believe that Buddhists in the spiritual world will descend and help Buddhists in the physical world receive and serve the Maitreya/Lord of the Second Advent (*D. P.* 1973, p. 188). Many of Tenchi Seikyō’s activities are aimed at tapping the benefits of this expected cooperation.

Shaman. The introduction to the *Divine Principle* describes Moon’s spiritual activities in a way that presents him as a type of cosmic shaman:

For many decades, he (Moon) wandered in a vast spiritual world in search of the ultimate truth.... Knowing that no one can find the ultimate truth to save mankind without going through the bitterest of trials, he fought alone against myriads of Satanic forces, both in the spiritual and physical worlds, and finally triumphed over them all. In this way, he came in contact

with many saints in Paradise and with Jesus, and thus brought into light all the heavenly secrets through his communion with God. (*D. P.* 1973, p. 16)

This passage portrays Moon as capable of traveling anywhere in the spiritual world (even without dreams or trances), and as having mastered all the spirits of the dark realms.

Accounts of Moon's youth portray him as having many of the common characteristics of spirit-mediums. One author quotes him as saying: "From childhood I was clairvoyant.... I can see through people's spirits" (quoted in KIM 1978, p. 9). The spiritual "calling" that he received from Jesus on Easter Sunday in 1936 is featured prominently in church biographical portraits of their leader.

Several authors have written explicitly about Moon as a shaman (cf. KIM 1978 and PAPER 1986), and many of the episodes in his life are very similar to Kawase Kayo's own shamanic experiences (see biography later in this article). An integral part of the shaman's worldview is animism, the belief that inanimate objects or nature have a conscious life. When the *Divine Principle* states that "...the universe is the substantial manifestation of the invisible God..." (p. 40), Unificationists believe this to mean that nature possesses, to a limited degree, God's intellect, emotion, and will. Even man-made objects can possess these qualities. Moon illustrated this one day when he explained his acquisition of a new Lincoln Continental luxury car. He recounted that when he first approached the car, it spoke to him and warned him that if he did not accept it as a gift, it would kill him. On a related note, Moon recently distributed small jade stones enclosed in plastic cases with his signature on them to members in Japan. Tōitsu Kyōkai members believe that these stones can effect healing and protection.

The belief in Moon as Miroku Bosatsu is rather secondary to the average Tōitsu Kyōkai member, since church lectures place more emphasis on Moon as the returned Christ. Members are mainly concerned not so much with his supposed powers to control the spiritual world and effect healings as with his believed ability to remove sin, especially "original sin." The former (spiritual) characteristics became primary and explicit only in Tenchi Seikyō. And Tōitsu Kyōkai ventured to create this "new" New Religion only because of Kawase Kayo's faith, her already established religious organization, and an unforeseen set of circumstances, primarily stemming from the nature of the movement's fund raising and witnessing, and the legal restrictions placed on those activities.

Tōitsu Undō's Fund Raising and Witnessing

The spiritualist beliefs and practices of Unificationists, especially Tōitsu Kyōkai members, are most apparent in their fund raising activities and, to a lesser degree, in their proselytizing. These fund raising activities, which have created quite a controversy in Japan and have severely tarnished the church's public image, are not unrelated to the origin and operations of Tenchi Seikyō, so let us examine them more closely.

The fund raising activities have their origin in Rev. Moon's vision for the world, the goal of which is to establish a worldwide theocracy or, barring that, a worldwide civil religion. In order to achieve this goal, he is establishing a "transfer culture," i.e., a Unificationist equivalent of every aspect of human industry. This "culture" presently includes manufacturing plants, food production and processing facilities, schools, hospitals, entertainment and communications centers, and so forth. These all require a great amount of money, which is procured by his religious converts (derogatorily referred to as "Moonies").

Though these zealous "Heavenly Kingdom" builders are acting from religious ideals, for legal purposes they must operate as businesses separate from the church.⁴ They have also discovered that only by pulling on people's "religious heartstrings" can they generate the needed profits. In Japan this has led to complex problems that, combined with attacks from the Communist Party of Japan⁵ and "witch-hunting" Christian groups, help explain both the church's denial of any relationship with its businesses and its creation of front groups. The resulting situation has been the basis for a continuing scandal in Japan, popularly referred to as *reikan shōhō* 靈感商法 (selling of spiritual goods).

For many years, Tōitsu Undō members have been going door-to-door selling a wide variety of products: marble vases, miniature marble pagodas, ivory name-stamps (*inkan* 印鑑), ginseng tea, Buddhist prayer beads, sauna baths, leather goods, cosmetics, and so forth. Many of these are made in Korea by church-owned businesses. Some of them—name stamps, marble products, and ginseng, for example—can be used to convey healing or spiritual powers, an important point since members usually pose as fortune-tellers or spiritual problem-

⁴ Moon was imprisoned for thirteen months in Danbury, Connecticut (USA) for tax evasion in 1984–1985.

⁵ Moon has a long history of virulent anti-Communist activity. The International Federation for Victory over Communism (V.O.C.; Kokusaishōkyō Rengō 国際勝共連合) is the branch of Unificationism that leads the confrontation in Japan.

solvers when they approach customers at their homes. One woman, who now works for a church publication, said she explained to customers that she was a “training monk.” She would enter the house by promising to read the householder’s fortune. Once inside she would talk very intimately, read their “name fortune,” and tell them that they and their children were facing a “time of change.” She would then offer to sell them a new name-stamp if they felt that they had a problem. In explanation, she told me that traditionally it is believed that each person’s name has a spiritual aspect. The number corresponding to the name’s *kanji* (Chinese ideograms) is reflected in the spirit world, so that if a person changes his name-stamp he can change his fortune. If the customer ordered a name-stamp, my informant would continue to visit the house and guide the person in a kind of “faith/spiritual education” while he or she awaited its arrival. She would teach customers to pray at their household altars (*butsudan* or *kamidana*), assuring them that by their faith and respect their ancestors would be liberated, and that once their ancestors were liberated, they and their families would be liberated as well. After the stamp arrived, customers would be invited to a showroom for the sale of marble vases.

Equating one’s fortune with the spiritual state of one’s ancestors, she assured me that everything she said and did was according to the *Divine Principle*. Put simply, she said that since all people inherit the sins of their ancestors, when they make “payment” for those sins by learning to love, then their ancestors are liberated (HIRAMATSU 1992).

Originally, Tōitsu Undō members marketed their goods through a variety of business firms, principally Happy World Inc., the largest church-related import trading company in Japan. After legal problems arose with this business arrangement, members formed “associations,” such as the “Spiritual Stone Lover’s Association” (Reiseki-aikō-kai 霊石愛好会). Under this new system, customers first join the association, then instead of buying the products they donate money as fellow members of the group. These tactics and the interrelatedness of various front groups have been uncovered through the investigative work of the Communist Party, its Consumer Centers, and the National Lawyer’s Association for Countermeasures against the Selling of Spiritual Goods (all of which also had attacked the sales activities of Happy World Inc. and the other businesses).

The many lawsuits brought against Tōitsu Kyōkai, Happy World Inc., the Spiritual Stone Lovers Association, and, recently, Tenchi Seikyō concerning these “sales of spiritual goods” have been well-publicized, not only in the regular newspapers, but especially in the Communist newspaper *Akahata*. The entire fund raising process has

been reported in elaborate detail, including the thousands of complaints by disgruntled customers and the billions of yen that have changed hands. For instance, the 18 July 1987 *Asahi Shinbun* calculated the total number of complaints (“victims”) from 1980 to 1987 to have been 15,000, with total purchases amounting to 317 billion yen (*ASAHI SHINBUN* 1987). Tōitsu Kyōkai has settled with plaintiffs out of court, while continuing to maintain that the church was not involved (*ASAHI SHINBUN* 1988b).

According to HATAKEYAMA Kentarō (1992), the editorial director for all Tenchi Seikyō publications, the Spiritual Stone Lovers Association still exists, though most of its members have now become members of Tenchi Seikyō. This transfer of membership has also been confirmed by the daily press (*ASAHI SHINBUN* 1988a).

As a world salvation effort, the Unification Movement is constantly striving to spread its message and make new converts. Hampered by widespread negative publicity, however, movement leaders have established new front groups that champion various Unification religious, social, or political causes. After the non-Unificationist members of these groups come to be trusted by their overt or covert Unification leaders, they are funneled closer into the center of the movement.

Though a part of Tōitsu Kyōkai’s constant drive for more money and members, Tenchi Seikyō is spared from being an exercise in opportunism by two factors: 1. There already existed before the establishment of Tenchi Seikyō the beliefs and practices within the Tōitsu Undō that invited further development in the form of a sister institution. Healings through ancestor liberation is a case in point. 2. The charismatic personage, the healing power, and the already existing organization of Kawase Kayo comprised a worthy foundation on which to build a spiritually fulfilling New Religion.

Spiritual Healing

Unification Church members throughout the world have always looked to the church to provide spiritual healing for both body and mind. To meet this need, several older Korean women members who are regarded as especially knowledgeable in spiritual matters have been made available worldwide for consultation. For the most part, these women diagnose severe mental illness as spirit possession, and lesser psychological problems, as well as illness and accidents as the result of either individual or ancestral sin. Prescriptions include praying for certain periods of days (usually 7, 21, 40, or multiples thereof),

cold showers, fasting, and ginseng tea. These “remedies” are almost always in addition to standard medical care. In fact, Tōitsu Undō has its own hospital in Tokyo that offers medical services both to members and to the general public.

Within the last few years the call for spiritual healing among the membership has greatly increased, primarily for the problem of infertility. There was a large number of mass weddings in the 1980s, but since members have often not been allowed to consummate their marriages until a late age (in Japan all women must be at least thirty-three years old), the problem has become critical. And since, according to the *Divine Principle*, the world can only be saved through the new generations of Unification “sinless” children, it is every member’s hope and duty to have children. In order to relieve this crisis, these Korean women healers are travelling across the globe holding spiritual liberation ceremonies that, it is believed, can remove the spiritual barriers that are preventing conception.

While in Tokyo during the summer of 1991, my wife and I attended one of these ceremonies at a neighborhood Tōitsu Kyōkai center. After a long lecture on the providential responsibilities of church members that lasted several hours, we and the approximately two hundred couples in attendance were instructed to write the names, sins, and good deeds of our ancestors on two-by-three-foot sheets of white cardboard. The sins that our ancestors might have been guilty of were adultery, murder, theft, suicide, etc.; it was also of concern if they might in any way be “troubled spirits.” No direct line was drawn between any ancestral crimes and our particular problems, but members regard adultery or the “misuse of love” as the ancestral sin most liable to cause the inability to conceive.

In the afternoon the Korean healer spoke to members individually or in couples about their ancestors, and prayed passionately with them. In conclusion we were instructed to say prayers of repentance for an allotted time period and a certain number of days, and to practice cold water ablutions each day for the same period. Then we went home, where we ritually burned our cardboard sheets—our repentance had liberated our ancestors.

Ceremonies like this one, which Western scholars do not usually associate with the Unification Movement, have become commonplace in the church in Japan and Korea. And a very similar ancestral liberation healing process has been formalized and institutionalized in Tenchi Seikyō.

Kawase Kayo, the Founder

The best way to come to an understanding of the nature of Tenchi Seikyō is to study the life of its founder, Kawase Kayo. This creative Buddhist New Religion is clearly the product of her spiritual gifts, training, and achievements.

According to her official hagiography Kawase was born on 30 May 1912 in Otofuke-chō, Hokkaido and raised by her grandparents, who had a very strong faith in Miroku Bosatsu. Different from other children because she was often aware of the presence of spirits, she studied the world's religions for the truth of life in the spiritual world. She had been plagued by difficulties throughout her life, but feels that these hardships have enabled her to understand the suffering of others. She laments that people who are very spiritual are often unaccepted by those around them, even their own spouses and children. She herself was confined to a psychiatric hospital by her family. She recalls that because she was always thinking about God (*kami-sama* 神様)⁶ and good spirits (*hotoke-sama* 仏様) she often failed to perform her household chores, and her family mistook this as a sign of mental incompetency. After her husband's business went bankrupt, their marriage failed (SEKAI NIPPŌ 1988).

Not long afterward she met a woman spiritualist who, guided by Kōbō Daishi 弘法大師, directed her on the path to the attainment of spiritual power. She began her life as a spiritualist by completing two pilgrimage circuits in Hokkaido: Tokachi's 十勝 eighty-eight holy places and Nukabira's 糠平 eighty-eight holy places—under the protection of the Eight Big Dragon Gods (Hachi Dai-Ryūjin 八大竜神) and the Horse-headed Kannon (Batō Kannon 馬頭観音). She felt “called” to accomplish a special mission, particularly when the Nukabira circuit climaxed with a glorious apparition of the “young” Kōbō Daishi. During her strenuous travels she received the blessings of many Shinto priests and learned the methods of exorcising evil spirits. Since that time she has paid homage at Ise Shrine, Mt. Fuji, and Mt. Koya every two years (TENCHI SEIKYŌ 1992c).

For seventeen years this modest countrywoman performed strenuous ascetic practices on Mt. Tsurugi 剣山, a “spiritual mountain” near her home. Each day she woke up at 3:00 A.M. and prayed to the *shin-*

⁶ Kawase's conception of the term *kami-sama* most certainly changed drastically when she became a Unificationist. Shintoists use the term to mean *kami* (an animistic term for any persons [such as an emperor or ancestor], spirits, or natural phenomena which are esteemed for their reputed powers), while many Japanese Christians and Japanese Unificationists use the term to refer to the Judeo-Christian God.

butsu 神仏 (gods and Buddhas)⁷ to make her their instrument for helping needy people. Twice a month, in the river near Obihiro Shrine 帯広神社, she performed cold-water ablutions. Often the temperature would drop as low as -30 C., and she sometimes risked her life to maintain this discipline (SEKAI NIPPŌ 1988).

To the many people who came to her for spiritual help, she taught that the basis of faith is gratitude. She inaugurated a “Gratitude Festival” (*kanshasai* 感謝祭) on the eighth of each month, and on the tenth she held an “Exorcism of Evil Spirits Ceremony” (*kimonbarai* 鬼門祓い). Even today when she performs the Gratitude Festival she receives revelations from the spiritual world that she recounts to her followers. She claims to have had, most notably, communications from Kōbō Daishi, Shakyamuni Buddha, and Jesus Christ. Kōbō Daishi’s most recent message was that he is concerned about Japan because of the lack of sexual morality among its young people, and he is especially concerned that, owing to abortions, the total number of childhood deaths is greater than the present population of Japan. The immorality among young people is causing many other problems as well. Buddha’s and Jesus’ messages have focused on their concerns that the people have become so selfish that they no longer think of their country or ancestors (TENCHI SEIKYŌ 1992c).

Her congregation consults her about illnesses, family disharmony, business matters, political elections, and other affairs. She then advises them on the basis of revelations from Heaven. Those who have received this guidance find it truly miraculous (TENCHI SEIKYŌ 1992c).

In the autumn of 1987 she received what she believed to be a message from Heaven to serve society more widely by establishing a new group to be called Tenchi Seikyō. As its chief representative, she firmly believes in Miroku Bosatsu and hopes one day to establish Miroku’s Paradise (Miroku Jōdo 弥勒浄土). Addressing her congregation, she says, “The most important thing in life is to have gratitude; for if you don’t have a grateful heart, you can’t serve your family, your ancestors, or your nation. In this present society, many people think only of themselves, they don’t understand the *shinbutsu*. They will regret this later. If the world only understood the existence of the spiritual world, it would become so much better” (AKAHATA 1990).

In addition to the above biographical facts, it is important to note that at some time in the early 1970s Kawase joined Tōitsu Kyōkai; in 1983, according to the AKAHATA (1988) she was married by Moon,

⁷ Tōitsu Kyōkai members told me that because Kayase Kayo is a Unificationist, she intends this term to include the Judeo-Christian God, and good spirits.

though without a spouse.⁸ When I asked Hatakeyama why Kawase joined the church, he said that it was because she had never heard a better explanation of the spiritual world than that presented in the *Divine Principle* (HATAKEYAMA 1992).⁹

Tenchi Seikyō

In the 1980s a religious “boom” took place in which there appeared a number of colorful new religious groups, called by social scientists the “new” New Religions (*shinshinshukyō*). These new actors on the religious scene are marked by certain general characteristics: a syncretic composition, a focus on the spiritual causation of physical ills, miracle cures, and a plan for world renewal. Usually led by charismatic leaders, these sects seem to be an attempt by the Japanese to acquire a new sense of identity by uniting their traditional values with a modern facade (READER 1991, pp. 195–99). Though the circumstances surrounding the creation of Tenchi Seikyō were certainly unique, this Miroku cult clearly fits the pattern of a “new” New Religion.

Background. In November 1956, after her years of strict ascetic training, Kawase Kayo received a revelation from Heaven to found Ten’un-kyō 天運教 (Heaven’s Good Fortune Church). Headquartered in Obihiro, Hokkaido (as is Tenchi Seikyō), the managing board of the church consisted of herself, her fifth son and his wife, and about six other family members. At that time the congregation had approximately 550 members (AKAHATA 1988). Ten’un-kyō did not center its activities around devotion to a particular object of worship, but was an association of people who sought Kawase’s spiritual therapy.

The “heavenly message” to create a new organization related to Tōitsu Undō came from an unusual source. In 1986 Moon’s teen-aged second son, Heung Jin, was killed in a tragic car accident. Afterwards Moon declared that Heung Jin Nim (the term *nim* is a Korean honorific roughly equivalent to “Lord” in English) “...now sits at the right hand of God in the spirit world together with Jesus. Kings and presidents, sages and saints have submitted themselves to his authority” (FEFFERMAN 1992, p. 13). After this announcement, a whole flurry of revelations were received by Unification Church members from “Lord Heung Jin.” These were followed by the “incarnation” of Heung Jin’s

⁸ This “single” marriage is common for elderly church members, and is considered necessary for their salvation.

⁹ Kawase Kayo was unavailable for an interview.

spirit in the body of a young African man who was a member of the church in Zimbabwe. This African Heung Jin was conducted around the world, where he “held lengthy workshops [to teach the *Divine Principle*], heard confessions, meted out penance, forgave sins, arranged adoptions for childless couples, healed marriages, and even solemnized divorces” (FEFFERMAN 1992, p. 13). It was he who, while visiting Japan, met Kawase Kayo (who had been receiving her own communications from the deceased Heung Jin) and directed her to gain legal status for a new Miroku church. This was Kawase Kayo’s “message” to start Tenchi Seikyō. According to HATAKEYAMA (1992), the African Heung Jin suggested their altar’s colorful lighting, their “New Age” mood music, the use of “The Water of Life” for purification rites, and a stone-striking ceremony for the casting away of Satan.

Within months, Tōitsu Kyōkai had organized Tenchi Seikyō centers throughout the country. Thousands of members and a large amount of money were invested in creating this new organization. From informal interviews conducted with these now covert Unificationists, it was found that members assigned to this new “mission” are generally uninterested in Buddhism. Their core belief is that Moon is Miroku Bosatsu and their core concern is that he needs money and members to save the world.

Of the 111,000 members in Tenchi Seikyō, seventy to eighty percent are housewives. All the members actively witness to their families and friends about the many “miracles” that have occurred within the group (HATAKEYAMA 1992). All of the centers (*dōjō* 道場) are staffed by covert Tōitsu Kyōkai members who conduct an elaborate recruiting program that is externally quite similar to that of Tōitsu Kyōkai. According to the AKAHATA (1988), these staff members take surveys on the street in order to find good prospects for Tenchi Seikyō membership. From the street, interested people are taken to video centers in nearby office buildings, where they are shown video tapes of the activities of Tenchi Seikyō. If they join, they are asked to move into a dormitory where they wake up at 5:00 A.M. to chant and study. At 8:00 A.M. there is a meeting where members determine to bring a certain number of people to the video center that day.

When I asked Hatakeyama how many members of Tenchi Seikyō know about its relationship with the Tōitsu Kyōkai (and thereby Moon), he responded that of all the believers, not including the Tōitsu Kyōkai members, about 8,000 have received testimony that Miroku Bosatsu is actually Sun Myung Moon.¹⁰ He also acknowledged

¹⁰ Some Tenchi Seikyō members are told that Sun Myung Moon precedes Miroku Bosatsu.

that Tenchi Seikyō makes very large contributions to Moon (HATAKEYAMA 1992).

Beliefs. The beliefs of Tenchi Seikyō have two main foci: the saving power of Miroku Bosatsu (sometimes referred to as Miroku Jison 弥勒慈尊), and the healing power of ancestor liberation.

Jan NATTIER (1988, p. 25) states that, historically, there have been four types of soteriological motifs displayed in Maitreya cults, namely:

1. Here/Now—The believer expects to meet Maitreya on earth during his or her lifetime.
2. Here/Later—The believer expects to meet Maitreya on earth, but in a future lifetime (rebirth).
3. There/Now—The believer seeks to have a “visionary” encounter with Maitreya, who is residing in his other-worldly paradise.
4. There/Later—The believer seeks to dwell in Maitreya’s paradise after this lifetime.

Nattier explains that the “Here/Now” type has been very rare in history, and that those Buddhists who have held such messianic expectations have “...no Buddhist canonical text on which to base their hopes” (NATTIER 1988, p. 31).

Because we know that Kawase has accepted Moon as the Messiah/Miroku Bosatsu, we can presume that when she teaches about Miroku’s Paradise she is referring to the Here/Now version. She says, “Miroku’s Paradise will be realized on the individual, family, tribal, national, and worldwide levels, and even on the spiritual level.” She calls this the “Family Paradise.” Referring to the present days as the “Last Days of the Law” (*mappō* 末法), she announces that a “True Man” will come from heaven and end all suffering and struggle in this world (TENCHI SEIKYŌ 1992b).¹¹

Ordinary Tenchi Seikyō members, however, generally have no belief whatsoever in Maitreya’s imminent appearance on earth. Their expectations center instead around Miroku’s healing powers and his heavenly paradise in the afterlife (“There/Later”).

Kawase attributes evil in the world to two causes: individual sin and ancestral sin. She admonishes her congregation, saying, “Each of you must be conscientious and not do bad things. Remove your evil desire. After all, all unhappiness is caused by sin, and all of us are burdened by the sins of our ancestors. We have to make reparation for our ancestors’ sins and the only way to do that is to have faith.” (TENCHI SHINPŌ 1991, p. 6)

¹¹ Kawase Kayo uses Buddhist equivalents for concepts presented in the *Divine Principle*.

Tenchi Seikyō's ancestor-liberation ceremonies involve either gratitude or purification. The person with filial piety can create happiness in life by showing appreciation for his/her ancestors' hard work and tribulations. The ancestors, as the origin of the person's life, seek to aid and protect their descendant. In response the descendant should "unite" with their love. If the descendant does good deeds, the ancestors too can benefit. On the other hand, if the ancestors have performed evil deeds and the descendant "connects" with these by having an impure heart, unhappiness or tragedy can result. So Tenchi Seikyō congregants are directed during these liberation ceremonies to show both gratitude to their ancestors and repentance for their sins (*TENCHI SHINPŌ* 1991, p. 6).

Practices. Tenchi Seikyō members participate in a direct and personal spiritual technology for dealing with the existence of evil. As is often the case among believers in the "new" New Religions of Japan, they have become sorrowfully aware that though science can explain how one becomes sick, it cannot explain why (READER 1991, p. 205). Nevertheless, unlike some of the other "new" New Religions, such as Mahikari, Tenchi Seikyō's ancestor-liberation and healing practices are not primarily the ritual display of an exorcist's power. Rather, they involve repentance for sins, symbolic reparation for ancestral transgressions, and individual transformation from an impure to a pure state. Healing is central to the practices of Tenchi Seikyō, and many people are drawn to the sect after hearing the testimony of those who have been cured. I have collected the testimonies of many members who have been healed, ranging from a two-year-old whose speech difficulties were solved to a grandfather whose inoperable cancer was arrested (*TENCHI SEIKYŌ* 1992a, p. 24). Members are quick to testify to the healing power of Miroku Jison's infinite mercy.

When a member has a specific health or family problem, he or she is first counseled by a Tenchi Seikyō teacher (*dōshi* 導師). The teacher analyzes the problem by focusing on the moral history of the person and his/her ancestors. Then a certain change in moral conduct and a purification ceremony are usually prescribed.

Though private ceremonies can be performed (the most common being the "water purification" ceremony), there are periodic community ceremonies as well:

1. Kami-sama and Miroku-sama Gratitude Festival (8th of each month)
2. Saint's Appreciation Festival (21st of each month)
3. "Respect for Heaven" Festival

4. "Great Saints" Festival
5. Great Miroku Festival

(TENCHI SEIKYŌ 1992b)

The sect also celebrates the traditional Buddhist holidays such as Obon, the nationally observed ancestor-festival days. The largest and most dramatic ceremony, however, is the "Sacred Fire Prayer" Festival (*Jōka-kigansai* 淨火祈願祭). Held once a year on Mt. Tsurugi in Hokkaido, this is a day-long ritual in which members present petitions written on wooden plaques (*gomaki* 護摩木) that are offered to heaven in large fires. According to the *SEKAI NIPPŌ* (1989), 700 people attended the festival in 1989 and some 240,000 plaques were burned. The prayers on the plaques concerned stillborn and aborted babies, Miroku Jōdo to come, the liberation of ancestors, prayers to Buddhist saints, and special wishes.¹²

In addition to these festivals, there is a regular Sunday devotional service at each of the local centers. Members gather before a brightly-colored Shintoesque altar of Miroku Bosatsu to pray, chant, meditate to beautiful "spiritual" music, sing hymns, listen to a sermon, and individually offer flowers on the altar. I was told that it is unusual to sing hymns at a Buddhist service, but it seemed to me to create a very lovely communal spirit.¹³

Conclusion

Members of the Unification Church in Europe and the United States first learned of the creation of a Unification-Buddhist sect in conjunction with the activities of the African Heung Jin. Western members may hold varying opinions regarding the efficacy of Tenchi Seikyō's spiritualist practices, but they would certainly agree that Tenchi Seikyō's members are making a contribution to the Messiah and that this contribution will aid in their eventual salvation. Their contribution would be considered an "Old Testament offering," for just as the ancient Hebrews, while not having the Messiah, faithfully offered sacrifices to God, Tenchi Seikyō members make offerings to the Messiah even though they may not know who he is.

There is only one other religious organization in Japan that existed

¹² Hatakeyama admitted that Kawase studied the practices of several other New Religions before she began her sect. In particular, he mentioned Agonshū 阿含宗, which holds very similar fire ceremonies.

¹³ I recognized several of the marble items on the altar as similar to items commonly sold by Tōitsu Undō members, and several of the songs as those sung at Tōitsu Kyōkai services.

before its leader joined the Unification Church and was allowed to continue with the aid of Unification members and money: the small Christian congregation of the Rev. Nakamura Shinichi 中村信一, called the Nihon Kirisutokyō Wakyō Kyōkai 日本キリスト教和協教会 (U.C.C.—The Union Congregational Concord Church of Japan) in Tokyo. This small group does not identify itself as part of Tōitsu Undō, and has never become part of the Unification Movement’s fundraising or witnessing program. The group’s object of worship is Jesus Christ, but Nakamura, who has been married (“blessed”) by Moon, will explain to his members, if asked, that Moon has been chosen by God to fulfill Jesus’ mission. Both Unificationists and non-Unificationists seem to be drawn to this church by Nakamura’s sincere faith and his Bible study groups.

In conclusion, it is apparent that Tenchi Seikyō’s beliefs and practices represent a logical extension of Unificationism, so that Unificationism’s creation of Tenchi Seikyō is “theologically” consistent. Especially by institutionalizing the ancestor liberation ceremonies, thus making them available nationwide and at all times, Tenchi Seikyō seems to be offering religious services that were not previously available in Tōitsu Undō, but were desired by both Tōitsu Undō members and by some of the Japanese public at large. Tenchi Seikyō provides its members with the immediate benefits they seek, with the added bonus of an avenue toward achieving a Unification-defined salvation of which they are not aware. Hatakeyama says that Kawase certainly longs to tell all her followers that their Savior is on earth, but she fears that the negative publicity surrounding Moon might prevent them from understanding (HATAKEYAMA 1992). And, in fact, some Tenchi Seikyō centers have had to close down because of the angry reactions of Tenchi Seikyō members who have learned of the identity of the group’s parent organization or the final destination of donations made to the group (AKAHATA 1988). In addition, many of the Tōitsu Kyōkai members who were assigned to work with Tenchi Seikyō have left to start their own Unification congregations in their hometowns, a form of mission work called “tribal messiahship.” These two developments seem to foreshadow a precarious future for this messianic Buddhist cult.

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