

Review: Thomas J. Belke, *Juche: A Christian Study of North Korea's State Religion*, Living Sacrifice Book Company, Bartlesville, OK, 1999

Pages: 413

Masterclass on North Korea

This unique perspective provides unmatched analysis of North Korea, which at base is a demon-controlled entity. The reason political analyses are all deficient is they can't comprehend this reality, and is also why all future negotiations based on politics alone are doomed to failure (as they have been in the past, like Bill Clintons 1994 KEDO agreement).

The above doesn't mean the book is deficient in practical analysis; there is great information on economics, DPRK military strength, etc., even though it is now twenty years old.

The tragedy for Christianity is the mixture of Communism and Kimilsungism has created the most hostile persecution perhaps in history. The author includes a number of horrific examples. including in 1970 when 27 Christians were steam-rolled feet first to maximise suffering.

Preface (pp. xi-xiv)

Kim Il Sung (KIS) is the almighty, eternal father; Kim Jong Il (KJI) the active word, the son; and Juche the revolutionary spirit ruling the nation.

Juche is the epitome of rebellion.

I) Introduction (pp. 1-5)

North Korea is largely mountainous, and the forested interior sparsely populated.

II) Central Juche Teachings (pp. 7-77)

The five goals of Juche:

1. Justify KJI as dictator-god.
2. Hereditary Kim-family succession.
3. Isolationism: self-reliance guarantees prosperity.
4. National reunification.
5. Juche philosophy export.

Juche is based on the principle of Humanism, that man is the master of everything and decides all.

The term “dialectic” is absent from Jucheism, likely because Pyongyang fears this would mean political change which is anathema.

Contra the ‘standard model’ of Communism, Juche has never ostracised, persecuted, or purged intellectuals, most likely due to the need to rebuild the country after WWII, the Korean War, and brain drain to the South after the armistice.

Jean Paul Sartre held that it is a random universe to which we bring meaning, that [contradictorily] everything is self-created.

In the 1980s, the DPRK developed the “Theory of the Su-ryong”, including an incarnational theory to justify Kim-to-Kim power transfer.

While the Kims were mortal, their political life span is eternal.

Great Su-ryong is “Great Leader”.

“The Party should bring up and take care of all ... from their birth to their death.”

The Korean Workers Party (KWP) is above the DPRK Constitution.

“North Korean bureaucrats are as adept as Jesuitical scholars in coming up with new reasons for their policies.” [p28]

Elections are “struggles” in which there is only one candidate, 100% participation and 100% approval. Marking a ballot with another candidate is dangerous.

The centrepiece of DPRK policy is reunification.

Jucheism regards man as an individual being, whereas Marxism regards man as a production means.

KIS proposed founding of the Democratic Confederal Republic of Koryo (DCRK).

Juche agitates for invasion of the ROK (“war for nationalism”)

“Flunkeyism” means “counterrevolutionary”.

The South is 14X stronger economically than the North, meaning any DPRK collapse would create a huge cost burden on the South due to refugees.

9,000 foot Paektu is claimed to be the most famous mountain in the world. Just below the summit is a crystal-clear volcano lake Ch'onji (“pond of heaven”). Even South Koreans believe it to be holy.

KIS promised “a chicken in every pot”, refrigerators, washing machines, and televisions. He destroyed over 1,500 churches.

Both the USSR (in the 1950s) and the West (in the 1970s) have propped up the DPRK.

KJI was a dilettante film maker.

KIS' wife, Kim Jong Suk (1917-1949) was transformed into a Juche goddess.

III) The Spiritual Dimension of Juche (pp. 78-128)

“Hanunim” was the traditional Korean Creator of earth and sky.

Juche prayers are offered to KIS and family and for him to live in the people's hearts. These are usually done in front of his statue.

Koreans believe deceased family members remain within the family circle in spirit, making a male child critical to carry on the line.

KJI kept a pleasure harems of teenage girls, for satisfaction, happiness, and dancing entertainment. They were selected and put through six month's 'training', and would serve till age 25.

North Korea adopted the Japanese "spirit of human bombs". This was rooted in Japan's defence against the Mongols in the 13thC with their small Japanese boats which stalled the Mongol navy. After four weeks a typhoon destroyed 4,000 Mongol ships (the Kamikaze winds). In gratitude, the Japanese entered into spiritual union with the sun goddess in the Daijosai ceremony.

The Japanese enforced Shinto during its 1901-1940 occupation of Korea, persecuted Christianity and abolished the Korean language.

The U.S Aircraft carrier is a special target for the DPRK as the symbol of Western Imperialism.

"The life of the social community is immortal, whereas an individual's life is limited." [p105]

Anyone caught with a Bible is sentenced to fifteen years' prison in a camp.

U.S. dollars are used for bribery.

False pride holds the DPRK back from accepting food aid, even during famine.

History of Korea (DPRK textbook): "Buddhism is a superstitious and false doctrine designed to paralyse the people's class consciousness and to protect the interests of the ruling class." [p113]

A copy of the *Tripitaka* is stored on 80K wooden blocks in North Korea's Myohyang-san temple.

Chondokyo is "the religion of the heavenly way".

The Korean Christian Federation was founded 11/28/1946, Pyongyang. It, “makes positive efforts to educate Christians in ... [Juche] .. and national reunification.”

In 1988, the DPRK opened the Protestant Pongsu Church and the Catholic Changchung Cathedral in Pyongyang. Staged services have new Bibles, churchgoers who don't know hymns, and the same people go to both churches.

IV) Juche's Spiritual Archenemy: The Church (pp. 129-161)

Dutch seamen first arrived in Korea in 1628; the first Catholic missionaries in 1785.

In 1863, Taewon Gun executed 8,000 Catholics and nine French priests. Korea became known as the Hermit Kingdom.

Gunboat diplomacy was used on the Chosun Dynasty.

Japan's victory over China in 1894-5 shifted the balance of power in the East including Korea.

800K Koreans were forced to serve Japan in WWII.

On 3/1/1919, Korea declared independence from Japan, which then killed 4,000 in suppression.

In the 1970s, a group of 27 Christians were crushed under steamrollers feet first to maximise agony.

A lot of Christian witnessing in the North is “deathbed witnessing”.

The ROK first starting sending helium-filled orange scripture balloons in 1969.

V) Origins of Juche (pp. 163-184)

The south eastern kingdom of Silla was often a Japanese vassal, but from AD 670-740 was autonomous.

In 1945, KIS had 2K Soviet advisers managing him.

Criticism of KIS was growing in the Korean War since he was losing.

1977 was the last year of economic parity between the DPRK and ROK.

In 1994, the KEDO (Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation) agreement gave \$5B in light-water nuclear reactors to Pyongyang in exchange for a freeze on weapons development.

Chemical and biological weapons are “poor man’s nukes”.

Stalin once exploded 100K T of TNT to prove he had a nuclear weapon.

VI) Juche Holy Sites (pp. 185-196)

There are over 30K KIS monuments in the DPRK.

In 1982, the 170m-tall Tower of Juche was built in Pyongyang.

DPRK propaganda says KJI was born in a secret log cabin on Mt Paektu.

VII) The Juche Worldview (pp. 197-236)

The U.S. has 40K troops in ROK at any one time.

Pyongyang demands removal of the DMZ wall.

The North has an estimated 1-5K T of chemical weapons, and a 2:1 military advantage over the South.

DPRK propaganda says everyone in the ROK has aids, and the Japanese are “the worst of living creatures”.

Kim Yushin of the Silla Dynasty (668-935) was a “flunkey” since he enlisted aid from the Tang Dynasty to unite Korea.

DPRK strategy is to maximise military pressure can cause the South the breakdown.

Bill Clinton was behind the KEDO.

In 1992, Deng Xiao Ping advised KIS against hereditary succession.

The DPRK is at best a “difficult friend” to China. A third of the latter’s aid goes to the former. The DPRK trades a ton of scrap metal for a ton of flour.

The DPRK and ROK both have Beijing embassies.

One Russian view of the DPRK is a leftover political embarrassment, the other the last bastion of Communist revolution.

VIII) Hwang Jang Yop: The Architect of Juche (pp. 237-261)

In October 1980, the KWP declared Juche as, “the only guiding principle of the Party”.

Hwang was KJI’s ghostwriter. In 1997, he defected to the South.

“Decisive measures” is code for terrorism.

KJI on defectors: “cowards, go if they want to go.”

Hwang claimed the DPRK could beat the ROK within six months, turning Seoul to ashes in under six minutes, partly since the North is 100% self-sufficient in arms production.

IX) Promoting the Culture of Juche (pp. 263-340)

KJI believed the North should never open up, reform is to opposed and the status quo maintained.

The North’s slow-motion famine lasted 1991-6.

Juche farming creates terraced fields from deforestation causing massive erosion and flooding.

In 1997, KJI executed his head of agriculture.

Juche quotas reduce quality, its enforced political meetings and rallies waste time, and resources are misallocated based on ideological criteria above economics.

Top DPRK exports are mineral oil, timber, machinery and electrical components.

Collectivism promotes a “do just enough mentality”.

KIS called for munitions self-reliance in 1970.

The DPRK is a male-dominated aristocracy.

40% of DPRK education texts are dedicated to KIS and KJI. Students must work for the KWP during the summer.

The Chinese would pretend to be immigrants during the Korean War then attack American soldiers.

Since 1967, the DPRK classifies people into 64 groups: the core (28%) lives in Pyongyang. The “hostile” have no rights and may live in camps (an estimated 200K), and work twelve hours’ a day hard labour. The DPRK also does medical experimentation on inmates.

Buildings are unmarked for security and anonymity.

KJI: “Bastards who escape [concentration camps] must be killed without mercy.” [p315]

A North Korean rejected by the community is as a dead man, a subhuman from which work is extracted till he dies.

The DPRK forges an estimated \$15M p.a.

From 1955-96, ~6K South Koreans were kidnapped by the North.

X) A Religion in Transition (pp. 341-364)

The Juche Era (Year Zero) began 1912 on KIS’ birthday.

Communism replaced the black flag of anarchy with its red flag.

It is thought KIS was assassinated to make way for KJI.

XI) A Biblical View of the Future of Juche (pp. 365-386)

End Notes (pp. 391-409)

Chajusong is the collective social life attribute granted by society.