

## Hajime Saito, Masumi Schmitat, Sophal Chamroeun and Tang Kimsruey lead God's work in Cambodia

Laurent Ladouce  
June 2018



Several different types of minister lead God's work in Cambodia. The Bible defines a minister as a servant and servant leadership keeps our movement in Cambodia healthy. Traditional leadership generally involves the exercise of power by the one at the top of a pyramid, but in the early 1970s, Robert Greenleaf wrote about servant leadership, in which the servant-leader shares power, puts others' needs first and helps people develop as highly as possible.

I met several Unificationist figures in Cambodia with different profiles and skills but who practice common traditions of leading through showing the example and serving others. This limited article allows me to speak of only a few, which is unfair. Meeting them reminded me of Ephesians 4, which describes the different roles of ministers, "some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers... for building up the body of Christ."

### **Prophet and evangelist**

Rev. Hajime Saito has blessed 721 couples, of which 563 did the three-day ceremony. His great passion now is to empower dozens of people to do the same. He is forty, and at this stage of his life, God is using him as a prophet and evangelist in Battambang with a mission to break through in a tribal messiahship pilot project. The special envoy to Cambodia, he spends half his time in Battambang, a quarter of it on activities in Phnom Penh (mostly PR work and church meetings) and a quarter of it visiting other provinces.

Rev. Saito has accumulated vast frontline experience, raising funds, witnessing, working in CARP and now tribal messiahship. He is a good teacher, who focuses on internal guidance "a strong point of Japanese Unificationism," he said.



*Rev. Hajime Saito and his wife praying for a family under their spiritual care*

How did he become such a person? He has served the providence in Indochina for years, which may not be a coincidence. That is where his grandfather's destiny changed. His paternal grandfather was a Manchurian medical doctor who married a Japanese woman. When Manchuria was a Japanese colony, the Japanese Army sent him to India. After losing the battle of Imphal against the Allied Forces in 1944, most of the Japanese officers of the 15th division committed suicide, but his grandfather did not. He walked from Imphal to Burma, where people of the Chin State, who were Christian, saved him from dying of malaria. Back in Japan, his grandfather decided to convert. The only Christian community near him was the Russian Orthodox Church. "My father also became a doctor, as did my brother," said Rev. Saito "Three generations of doctors, but not me. I inherited two things from grandpa, I converted to the Orthodox Church and I love Indochina, where he received a new life. A few years ago, as a Unificationist, I had a chance to visit the Chin tribe. It took me thirty-six hours to get there from Yangon, Myanmar's capital."



*True Mother recognizing Peter and Masumi Schmitat for their years of dedication and efforts in Cambodia*

He had been raised Buddhist but grew tired of the rituals. As a teenager, he was interested in philosophy and the literary works of Soseki Natsume (1867–1916) and Mori Ogai (1862–1922) a doctor and novelist. His attraction to novelists influenced by Western thought brought him gradually to the Christian side. "My grandfather, a Christian Manchurian, managed to become the national president of the Japanese Medical Association. He talked to me about Albert Schweitzer, a theologian, composer and medical doctor. I thought that this man substantiated Christianity. Without knowing much about Jesus, I decided to receive baptism in the Russian Orthodox Church. Dressed in white, I was immersed in water and reborn as Hajime Andrei Saito. Shortly afterward, in 1994, a Korean man, now the special envoy to Bolivia, witnessed to me. He took care of me well; without him, I could not continue. I accepted the Principle and then entered a military academy, but instead of joining the Japanese Army, I became a soldier for God."

After some time in Europe, Hajime Saito entered Sun Moon University. He graduated in theology and North Korean studies, with the help of his spiritual father. In 2003, the Korean FFWPU Overseas Department sent him to Cambodia to work with Service for Peace. At that time, few Unificationists were in Cambodia, but many young people joined through Service for Peace. Some are now Cambodia's core members.

Rev. Saito's wife is Thai. In 2012, at the age of thirty-four, he became the FFWPU leader of Indochina (Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos). When Cambodia became a strategic nation, he became the Cheon Il Guk special envoy to Cambodia.

Rev. Saito is an accomplished and eloquent leader, who knows Japanese, Korean and English fluently. Korean and Japanese Abel figures respect him. Our international headquarters consults him. He can communicate in Thai and Burmese and give public speeches in Khmer. For a person who serves as a prophet and evangelist, this "freedom of speech" is precious.

"Why do I focus on Battambang?" he mused. "For pragmatic reasons. To restore a nation, we have to bless 10 percent of the population. Cambodia has 15 million people. If I stay in Phnom Penh and ask myself how I can bless 1.5 million people, I become dizzy. If I have a base in Battambang and I want to



bless 10 percent of Battambang Province, gradually we'd have to reach 100,000 people with a good team and the local leaders' cooperation. We began the activity without a clear vision of the follow-up but we are now making clear rules and have a consistent methodology."



*Sophal Chamroeun, national leader of the movement in Cambodia, is at the far left; Hajime Saito, FFWPU leader of Indochina (Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar and Laos) is fourth from the right and is holding his wife's hand and Tang Kimsruy, president of YSP Cambodia, is at the far right.*

### **Apostle and pastor-counselor**

Mrs. Masumi Schmitat, another figure in the Cambodian movement, is Japanese, like Rev. Saito, but with a different profile. She and her husband are the German national messiahs to Cambodia. "We moved from Camberg... to Cambodia," she said with a smile. Camberg is the German movement's training center. "Peter and I were responsible to maintain those facilities. Before that, I had been involved in the Saeilo providence. We tried to sell machine tools in Germany for many years."

Her life in Germany belongs to the distant past. Masumi has spent about a third of her life in Cambodia. Here, she reveals two key points of servant leadership. "When Father asked volunteers from the seven providential nations to apply to be national messiahs in 1996, my husband and I knew that we were unqualified, but we could offer our sincere help since there were not enough volunteers. We had a consensus as husband and wife that we had to do it."

In the beginning, Masumi came occasionally to Cambodia in 1996 and 1997. She and Japanese volunteers started a blessing campaign. The first person to receive the holy wine was their landlord. As the blessing campaign was gaining momentum, Masumi heard that the worldwide goal of 3.6 million couples had been reached.

In July 1997, Masumi witnessed Hun Sen's coup d'état of his co-prime Minister Norodom Ranarith. "Through the windows, we saw people fighting in the street. I can't remember being afraid. Rather, I observed that young soldiers were crying, afraid to lose their life."

In April 1998, exactly twenty years ago, things changed, when the former Khmer Rouge dictator Pol Pot died. Masumi then decided she would stay in the country, no matter what. She received financial support from different sources to rent a house and have her four children move to Cambodia. What about Peter? "For sixteen years, Peter stayed in Germany, spending most of his time making money to support our family in Cambodia."

Today, Peter lives in Phnom Penh, and his beautiful paintings decorate the walls of the headquarters. Their four children, who grew up in Cambodia, with no other second-generation members, are all blessed. Today, Peter and Masumi Schmitat feel concerned to guide the young couples in their married lives and in the education of their children. The transition from center life to married life is always a critical issue in the growth of our communities. As a senior and successful couple, Peter and Masumi can help a lot.

"It was not always easy. When my son Kai became a teenager, he would not listen to me anymore. His father was never there. He became addicted to video games. I quarreled with him often and finally, we decided to go to Chung Pyung, where he changed completely. At the age of fifteen, he started to go to

Thailand occasionally to do fundraising. His dream was to study in the US, and nothing would change his mind. Now, he is happily blessed."

A few months ago, Kai invited his three siblings and their spouses to a resort in Cambodia, with Peter and Masumi. He paid for everything. On the tenth anniversary of their blessing, Kai's wife wrote to her mother-in-law, "It's hard to believe ten years have passed already and yet, I can't imagine I ever lived without him. I struck gold with this man!"

The presence of the Schmitat family in Cambodia for twenty years is an important factor for the current blessing coming to the country.



*Second from the right is Tang Kimsrui, president of YSP Cambodia; fourth from the right is national leader, Sophal Chamroeun.*

### **Pastor and teacher**

Many Cambodian members are still university students but some have completed their studies. As they form young couples and become parents, they need role models slightly above their age who have made a successful transition from missionary life to stable family life in a settled congregation. A congregation of core members needs shepherds who can guide for life, show the tradition, protect and lead by example. Political authorities, the media and scholars should see these shepherds as accountable and reliable, so that society can consider our movement a legitimate voice, especially in the capital city.

Sophal Chamroeun and Dr. Tang Kimsrui are two such Cambodian Unificationist leaders. Sophal Chamroeun is Cambodia's national leader. He is a man of the city, apparently born into the Cambodia's middle class; whereas Dr. Tang Kimsrui comes from a poor family from rural Cambodia. Both have abilities to represent the movement among the elites in Cambodian society, and they hope to serve the long-term future of our movement.

Sophal Chamroeun went through the process of joining our movement in 2003 through Service for Peace activities. "At that time, I was studying business administration. We ran a project together, and then I attended Sunday service. After that, I went to a two-day and a seven-day workshop. In 2004, I had a year of training in Thailand, where I could learn fund raising and witnessing. After my blessing in 2005, to a Japanese sister, I completed my spiritual training on a Cambodian team traveling in Asia. We visited Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, Korea and Japan."

From 2014 until now, he has served as the national leader of FFWPU in Cambodia. While his wife coordinates the Japanese wives living in Cambodia and is involved in the education of the very young members of the second generation, Sophal is taking much time in doing administrative tasks, dealing with legal matters and PR work. He has invested all his heart in the new headquarters project, which will open a new era of settlement.

"I try to see the whole, not always the details," he explains quietly. "I was quite alone for a while. I badly needed to share my heart and ideas with a partner and assistant. Dr. Tang Kimsrui is just that man."

Tang Kimsrui, born in 1986, is the sixth child and only son in a family of seven children. His parents are farmers. He grew up with a lot of support from his parents as well as from his five older sisters. All of his older sisters had to drop out of school early because they had to work to support the family. In 2001, he

entered the Thbong Khmum High School (in eastern Cambodia) and in 2004, he entered the Royal University of Phnom Penh, one of the top public universities in the nation. This is where he met the Unification Church in 2005.

Tang Kimsrui felt a call to use his intellectual capacities and spiritual resources to contribute to the betterment of Cambodia. With this dream, he pursued further education in Korea. In 2011, he entered a master's program at Cheongshim Graduate School, majoring in theology. He arrived in the wintertime with less than \$2,000 in his pocket. It was very far from being enough to pay for his studies and to live in Korea. Kimsrui began a new life in a foreign land without a substantial means of financial support, but with hope to succeed in this impossible mission, because the purpose was bigger than he was. His first challenge was language. He was admitted to the Korean Language class which is also not cheap, and he struggled with it for about a year due to his financial situation and tough schedule (both the master's course and Korean language program which, ran from Monday to Friday).

In the second year of his master's program, the financial burden prompted him to go off campus three days per week to work in jobs including part-time jobs -- dish washing, assisting in a bakery, waiting tables in a restaurant, construction work and language interpreting. These jobs taught him a lot about how to be a true human being. Since those jobs did not pay enough, he decided to find a new way. One day, he thought, If I go to a wholesale market to buy some socks and sell them to Korean people, I can get more money.

He tried it and was successful. By keeping his purpose in mind, he succeeded in obtaining a master's degree a year and half later. But in the summer of 2013, Kimsrui decided to take on another impossible mission, to pursue a doctoral degree in theology. It was even harder for him because while the scholarship the school provided covered 50 percent of the tuition fee, he still had to pay more than \$9,000 for the three-year course. While he started the doctoral program, Kimsrui also started his family life four years after his blessing in 2009 to Sayaka Tani, from Japan. In the years that followed, Kimsrui was in Korea, while his wife lived in Japan, eventually taking care of their two children.

To complete his four-year doctoral degree, Tang Kimsrui had to live alone in Korea. He never felt isolated from his family in Japan and his supportive community in Cambodia. Throughout those years, he learned to be a good human being, to overcome hardships, to appreciate people around him, to engage with families and friends and to be a good husband and father. Kimsrui could overcome these challenges because he learned and practiced True Parents' teachings. Dr. Kimsrui's doctoral work relates directly to national restoration, from a theological but also political viewpoint. He chose the topic "A study on the concept and structure of the sovereignty of Cheon Il Guk."

Now, Dr. Kimsrui is back in Cambodia and feels determined to support True Parents' work. His dream is to spread True Parents' teachings and love to all Cambodian people. Now, his family is together, living in Phnom Penh among the Cambodian community. For Dr. Kimsrui, the priority of the providence in Cambodia is to educate young people clearly, so they understand the Principle and True Parents' teachings as well as family values. He said, "Based on the foundation of faith and on understanding True Parents' hearts and love for human beings from my personal experiences in Korea, I feel strong determination to take responsibility for educating Cambodian people to accept True Parents' teachings and I love building Cambodia as a God- and True-Parents centered nation."