

**A PORTRAIT
OF KOREAN MISSIONARIES
IN ILOIO CITY**

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Abstract

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This study, *A Portrait of Korean Missionaries in Iloilo*, describes and analyzes Korean missionaries as to their preparation and theology on missions, sensitivity to local culture, leadership style, program activities, and their problems and coping strategies. Specifically, this study answers the following questions: 1) How are the Korean Missionaries equipped personally, culturally and spiritually before coming to Iloilo City? How linguistically prepared are they? 2) How do Korean missionaries understand and appreciate the culture of the people in Iloilo? What are the attitudes of the Korean missionaries towards Filipino culture? 3) What problems do Korean missionaries encounter in their life and mission in Iloilo City? How do they cope with these problems? What are their solutions to resolve these problems? 4) What are the program of activities the Korean missionaries implement? How do they understand mission and what are their strategies in doing mission? What is the style of leadership they adopt? How do they continually update and assess their missionary strategies, as well as their ministry here in Iloilo City? Do Korean missionaries seek advice from other Korean missionaries who were ahead of them as well as from Filipinos? How do they take the suggestions from others especially from their Filipino co-workers?

This study includes Korean missionaries representing four Korean denominations who are currently working in Iloilo, Philippines. The primary data used in this study were taken from interviews with eleven Korean missionaries working in Iloilo City.

The method used in this study is descriptive and analytical. The study uses interview to obtain data. All 14 Korean missionaries working in Iloilo City were targeted to be interviewed but only 11 missionaries responded which represent 78 percent of the targeted population for interview. The interview questionnaire was formulated by the researcher and was tested to four missionaries from whom feedbacks were requested. Their feedbacks were incorporated in the final questionnaire. The interview questions were translated into the Korean language so that the respondents can easily understand the questions being asked. The answers to the questions were collated and edited by the researcher so that the questions that were not answered were noted and the researcher went back to the respondents and let them answer the questions once again. Then the data obtained were encoded.

From the data obtained from 11 respondents it was found out that the Korean missionaries came from four different denominations; namely, Presbyterian, Holiness, Assembly of God and Methodist. Some of them already stayed here for fifteen years and the newest stayed here for one year. Before they came to Iloilo they underwent study and training including the study of the language of the people, their culture, history, attitude and economic status.

The missionaries were able to identify themselves with the Ilonggos and were able to adjust to their lifestyle. Making adjustments with the culture and attitudes of the local people, although difficult, were important factors in deepening their commitment to do mission in Iloilo. There are differences between the culture of the people in Iloilo and the Korean culture. The context and situation in life in Iloilo is different from Korea. It is difficult for the Korean missionaries to adjust but slowly they are able to learn from the

Iloilo context. Thus, the mission strategies that are being used by Korean missionaries in Korea are quite irrelevant and so Korean missionaries with the help of the local pastors and leaders are struggling to make their localize mission strategies more effective.

Moreover, Korean missionaries have assessed their missionary work and they found out that in general their missionary activities were seen by the local people positively. For instance, Christian education and leadership trainings have produced pastors who are now leading local churches. In addition, there are many churches that were organized in Iloilo during the last fifteen years of Korean missions.

The leadership of the Korean missionaries is seen as “good”. Korean missionaries were seen as good models of Christian life. The missionaries have shown cooperation in developing strong ties among the missionaries and among the local people and the missionaries.

Missionary work, however, produces some difficulties in relation to missionaries and to people they are working with. The missionaries, however, sought advice from fellow Koreans and even from Filipinos so that they were able to resolve many of their problems.

Based on the aforementioned findings, the following are recommended:

1. There is in need for thorough preparations before a missionary should go to a foreign land and do missions to lessen conflicts with the local people. There should intensive trainings and studies about the nature of the people, their behavior, culture and way of living to lessen troubles in the mission field. A missionary should have a complete background information of the mission area before commencing missionary work.

2. During the stay in the mission area, a missionary should try to study or learn the language of the people to understand the local people well and to lessen miscommunication. Learning a language different from one's native tongue is not easy but trying to speak the language of the people in the mission field is a positive response because it means that a missionary is interested in mingling or joining with the local people. People will cooperate more if they will find out that a missionary is doing the best to learn their language
3. It is understood that every nation has its own culture. Koreans have different cultures from Filipinos particularly the Ilonggos. Missionaries come here to share the Word of God to the people. It would be difficult for them to understand or adjust to the cultures of the people but a missionary should respect people's culture. Each and every culture should be respected because there is no superior culture in this world.
4. Korean missionaries should be versatile enough. No matter what the race of the people is, he or she should know how to deal with them because the people in the mission field are very important for the mission to prosper.
5. Openness is a great factor which missionaries should develop. Even if they belong to the same nationality it is important for them to be open with each other so that if a problem arises, they can solve it with ease.