

# Introducing East Asian Peoples

**imb** INTERNATIONAL  
MISSION BOARD  
EAST ASIAN PEOPLES



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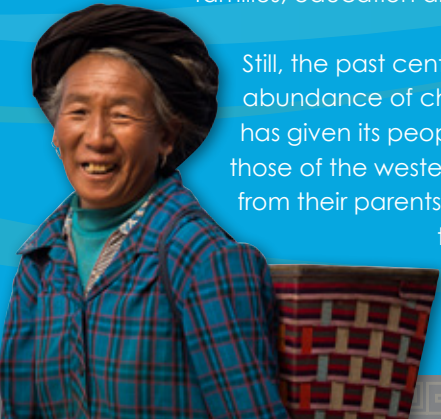
# The East Asian Affinity

China, Japan, Mongolia, South Korea and Taiwan, countries on the western edge of the Pacific Ocean, are central to the work of the East Asian Peoples Affinity Group.

Most East Asian people live in this geographic region, but the focus of our efforts is to communicate the gospel, helping East Asian people hear and respond favorably to the Good News, wherever they live around the world.

The people of East Asia are like people in other countries: they want a high standard of living, warm friendships, strong families, education and meaningful employment.

Still, the past century has produced an overabundance of challenges in East Asia and has given its people values quite different from those of the western world and, in many ways, from their parents' and grandparents'. Let's take a closer look.



## Issues and Challenges facing the EA Affinity

### Population

The population within East Asian countries is exploding. Already, they are home to nearly 1.67 billion people, representing a fourth of the world's population. East Asian governments grapple with unprecedented challenges, including how to limit the explosive birth rate, control migration to already crowded cities, maintain social stability and encourage job creation for the millions of unemployed.

China, home to 1.38 billion people, is the most populous country in the world and has more than 173 cities with populations exceeding 1 million.

### Urbanization

Each year millions of East Asia's rural citizens flock to cities, seeking a better life.

In the last 10 years, Japan's population has shifted so that 92 percent of Japan's people live in cities. Roughly 83 percent of the people of South Korea live in urban areas, 20 percent in the urban area of Seoul.

In China, there is a plan to shift 350 million rural residents into newly constructed towns and cities by 2025. The government plans to fully integrate one billion people into China's cities by 2030.

### Economic Strength

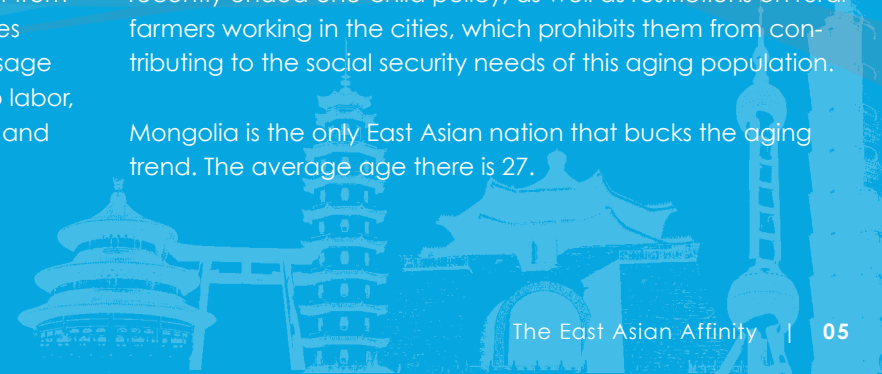
Some experts anticipate a global economic power shift from West to East over the next decade. Less stringent policies regarding environmental standards, natural resource usage and labor protection, along with abundant and cheap labor, make Asia an attractive base for international business and manufacturing.

### Aging Population

Japan's population continues to decline, due to one of the world's lowest birth rates and one-fourth of their population being 65 or older. The shrinking labor force limits tax revenue and has caused Japan's debt to grow by more than twice the country's economic output.

China has also experienced a dramatic increase in its aging population, and the country's labor force declined in 2012 for the first time in decades, raising concerns about its economic prospects. There is a shrinking labor force resulting from China's recently ended one-child policy, as well as restrictions on rural farmers working in the cities, which prohibits them from contributing to the social security needs of this aging population.

Mongolia is the only East Asian nation that bucks the aging trend. The average age there is 27.





# Map of East Asia



## China

Population: 1.38 billion (January 2016)



## Japan

Population: 126.3 million (January 2016)



## Mongolia

Population: 3 million (January 2016)



## South Korea

Population: 50.5 million (January 2016)



## Taiwan

Population: 23.39 million (January 2016)





## Cities

China has more cities with a population over 1 million than any other country in the world. Much of this population explosion comes from rural peoples, many of them unreached people groups, moving to the cities to find work to support families back home. Within the next 10 years, the Chinese government aims to have 70 percent of the people living in cities. According to a recent McKinsey Report, China will have 221 cities with a population in excess of one million in 12 years. Shanghai, China's largest city with 23.9 million people, is known as the Pearl of the East for its beauty and economic significance. It is on the cutting edge in almost

every field: technology, business, arts, finance, education and transportation. Rapid modernization and development is transforming the city at an incalculable pace. Fourteen metro lines and 329 stations provide the longest subway network in the world. There are four railway stations, two commercial airports and the busiest container port in the global market. Shanghai serves as China's center of finance and foreign investment and boasts some of the world's tallest skyscrapers.

## Religion in China

- The Communist Party, and therefore the government of China, is officially atheist.
- China officially allows the practice of five religions: Protestant Christianity, Catholicism, Islam, Taoism and Buddhism. Some have strong animistic components in their expressions.
- While China is considered the world's largest atheist country, about two-thirds of its people engage in some religious practice each year, mostly Buddhism or folk religion (ancestor worship).
- Most Chinese take a pragmatic view of religion: "If it will help me, then I'll believe in it."





# China

## Christianity in China

- The Chinese government sanctions only two Christian organizations:
  - The Three-Self Patriotic Movement (TSPM), the official Protestant Christian church in China.
  - The Catholic Patriotic Association (CPA), which has no ties to Rome.
- Churches in China are required to register with the government and follow its guidelines for their religious practices.
  - Some churches, often known as house churches, refuse to submit to government registration. Some large, unregistered churches in major cities advertise and meet openly without government interference.
  - Estimated Christians in China total 100 million, including 84 million Protestants (TSPM 29.5 million, house churches 54 million) and 21.1 million Catholics (CPA 7.4 million, house churches 13.4 million).

## Bridges and Barriers to the gospel

### Bridges

- Many Chinese have prospered during the spectacular growth of the Chinese economy, but material possessions haven't brought satisfaction. They are open to Christian teachings to bring peace to their hearts.
- Any Chinese with internet access can find great information about the gospel and Christianity on websites created by Chinese Christians inside and outside of China.
- International Christians still play a crucial role in the growth and health of Christianity in China. As university English instructors, they introduce the best and brightest to Jesus. As businessmen, they model ethical, but profitable, business practices. As trainers of Chinese Christian ministers and lay leaders, they help locals fulfill the Great Commission inside China and beyond its borders.
- Generally, Chinese have a favorable impression of Christianity. Chinese and international Christians who are peaceful and helpful towards others create goodwill, giving brothers and sisters platforms to share the gospel.
- Chinese Christians who've been radically saved and trans-

formed by Christ can share the gospel powerfully among family, friends, colleagues, old classmates and neighbors.

### Barriers

- Many cults and non-orthodox sects, such as Jehovah's Witnesses, operate in China. But the most dangerous cults are homegrown, such as Eastern Lightning, which is especially effective in rural areas.
- Because Christianity is seen as a foreign religion, authorities continue to monitor and crack down on international Christians working with unregistered churches. Even those working with the TSPM church are viewed with suspicion.
- Those who openly follow Christ are often ridiculed by family and friends. Communist Party members who have accepted Christ often hide their faith to avoid losing their jobs.
- Strong animistic beliefs and ancestor worship make it hard for many to turn from them to Jesus.
- Although the gospel is widely accessible to those who understand Putonghua, that leaves out an estimated 30 percent of China's population, especially ethnic minorities in rural areas who likely have never heard Jesus' name in any language.

## Population

1.38 billion (January 2016)

## Religions

Officially atheism; also Buddhism (18.2%), Christianity (5.1%), Islam (1.8%), Taoism (less than 1%), Folk Religion (less than 1%), Hindu (less than 1%), Jewish (less than 1%), and unaffiliated (52.2%)

## Language

Standard Chinese or Mandarin (Putonghua)

## Did you know?

- On Weibo, China's version of Twitter, searching for "Bible" yields more than 17 million results. "Christian congregation" brings almost 42 million.
- More than 70 percent of the world's toys are made in China.
- China suffers the world's worst "brain drain." Seven of every 10 Chinese students who enroll overseas never return to live in China.
- An estimated 2.4 million people die each year in China due to air pollution.

# Japan



As a group of families watches their children's sports day, conversation moves to how to keep families strong when husbands work 70-plus hours a week. One wife speaks up, "As Christians, we ...," telling how she relates to her husband and children. The others gather closer and press for details. In a country where less than 1 percent of the population is Christian, actually talking to one is rare.

One man says that his birth was recognized by a Shinto ceremony, he was married in a Christian ceremony at a hotel and he will be buried as a Buddhist. He quips, "I have NO religion at all. I just believe in fate."

The conversation continues, focusing on concerns of the aging population, natural disasters and the demise of traditional values and families until the Christian father asks, "Is it really fate?" opening a discussion about the real purpose of life. He introduces them to God, who desires a real, living relationship. Japanese crave this at a heart level and several nod their

heads as the subject of "munashisa," a Japanese term meaning "emptiness of heart" is mentioned.

The Christian wife then tells that she became a believer at age 23 after hearing the gospel from a missionary. Now, married with children, she and her husband are helping start a new church.

## Religion in Japan

- Most Japanese identify with Shintoism, Buddhism or both!
- Very few Japanese will say they worship their ancestors or nature, yet most do, not considering ancestor worship a religion.

## Christianity in Japan

- About 1 percent of Japanese claim to be Christian, but half or fewer of those are evangelical. Many believers are over age 60.
- Approximately 3,000 Christian missionaries from overseas serve in Japan. Numbers are dwindling.
- The Japan Baptist Convention has more than 300 churches, most with fewer than 50 members. Few young people are willing to serve as leaders.

## Bridges and Barriers to the gospel

### Bridges

- Before becoming a Christian, the average Japanese has at least three "encounters" with Christ, whether through personal witness, Christian groups or reading the Bible.
- Because Japanese have one of the highest literacy rates in the world, Christian literature is a very effective tool for the gospel.

### Barriers

- Many Japanese perceive Christianity as a foreign religion.
- Japan allows freedom of religious expression, but extreme pressure from tradition and family to participate in ancestor worship and the fear of offending ancestors' spirits keep many from Christianity.
- Japanese avoid confrontation and want to be part of the group. Being a Christian separates them from mainstream society.
- Most Japanese have no concept of a daily walk and relationship with a living God. Christianity's claim to absolute truth is very difficult for the Japanese to understand. Because religious words are rich with Buddhist and Shinto concepts, the Japanese language is a barrier.

## Population

126.3 million (January 2016)

## Religions

Shintoism 83.9%, Buddhism 71.4%, Christianity 2%, other religions 7.8%. Note: Total exceeds 100% because many people practice both Shintoism and Buddhism (2005).

## Language

Japanese

## Did you know?

- Japan's land area is comparable to that of California, yet its population equals almost half that of the United States.
- The literacy rate in Japan is almost 100 percent.
- Japan is composed of more than 3,000 islands.
- Metro Tokyo's population is greater than that of Canada.

# Mongolia



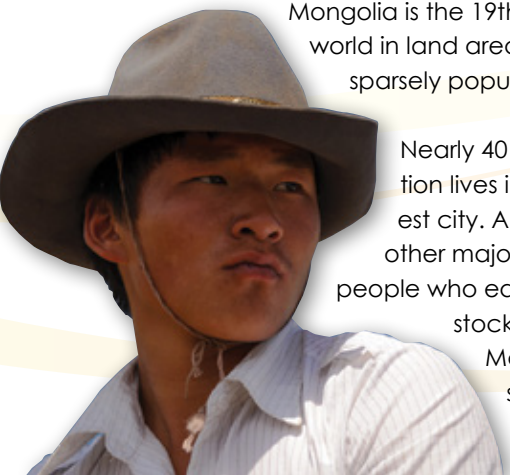
In the capital city of Ulaanbaatar (oh-LAN-BAH-tar), young professionals push through rush-hour traffic to get to the office on time. On the quiet grassy plains, nomads tend their sheep, returning home to gers, round tent dwellings, at day's end. In the mountain valleys, breeders carefully raise livestock. Meanwhile, winds crossing the Gobi desert stir up dust storms, creating an uninhabitable land.

Modern Mongolia is a peaceful country with a distinctive culture. Geographically, it sits atop China, south of Russia.

Mongolia is the 19th largest country in the world in land area, but also the most sparsely populated.

Nearly 40 percent of the population lives in Ulaanbaatar, the largest city. Another 28 percent live in other major cities. The rest are rural people who earn a living through livestock, agriculture or mining.

Many follow a nomadic or semi-nomadic lifestyle.



## Religion in Mongolia

- During the reign of Genghis Khan, Tengriism and shamanism were widely practiced, but eventually gave way to Tibetan Buddhism.
- Throughout most of the 20th century, religious practices were repressed.
- Tibetan Buddhism has become the most widely practiced religion in the area, but other religions are quickly gaining followers.
- Most Mongolians visit temples in times of need.

## Christianity in Mongolia

- In 1990, there were only 40 known believers throughout the country.
- Mongolia has an estimated 60,000 believers in 500 churches.
- The Mongolian Evangelistic Association has a goal of reaching 10 percent of Mongolia for Christ by 2020.
- The Mongolian church has a vision to take the gospel to every country that was a part of Genghis Khan's great Mongolian Empire. Today, Mongolia sends more missionaries into the world per Christian than any other country — one for every 222 Christ-following Mongolians.

## Bridges and Barriers to the gospel

### Bridges

- The most effective way to evangelize Mongols is in homes around the table. Explaining God's plan from creation to Christ in an extended conversation brings greater understanding and receptivity.
- Young people are generally more open to the gospel than older generations. English camps, sports classes and human needs projects have been useful tools in reaching Mongolians, including remote nomadic herdsmen.
- The rapid growth of Christianity in Mongolia in the past 25 years indicates a great degree of openness to the gospel.

### Barriers

- Mongols generally do not accept the idea that Jesus Christ is the only path to salvation. They don't want to reject their other beliefs to follow Christ exclusively.
- Because of their upbringing and culture, many Mongolians consider themselves Buddhists. They assume that becoming Christian would separate them from their family and cultural identity.



## Population

3 million (January 2016)

## Religions

Buddhist Lamaist 53%, Muslim 3%, none 38.6%, Christian <2.2%, Shamanist 2.9%, other 0.4%

## Language

Khalka Mongolian 90%

## Did you know?

- Mongolia is three times larger than Spain, yet Spain has a population 13 times greater than Mongolia.
- Mongolia is a land-locked country with no navy.
- In Mongolia, 27 percent of the people live under the poverty line, roughly \$3.44 each day.
- Mongolia has 14 head of livestock for every person.



# South Korea



Kim Chung-hee's mind races as she edges past other subway commuters in Seoul and collapses into a seat. Does she have everything she needs for her class presentation at 9 a.m.? Tablet PC, mobile hard drive, connection cable ... they're all there. After checking her perfectly manicured nails, she reaches into her purse to grab her new smartphone and uses the front-facing camera to check her hair and make-up. Intent on looking her best, getting the highest grade in her class and impressing her professor and fellow university students, she tries to relax as she plugs ear buds into her phone to listen to music.

South Korea, a modern, image-conscious nation with the 13th largest economy in the world, is very different from North Korea, a poor country whose people live under strict rule. The two countries existed as one nation from the seventh century until 1945. At the end of World War II, Korea was divided along the 38th parallel, a political division that continues to this day.

Though Koreans are among the most ethnically and linguistically homogenous people in the world, Korea also possesses a significant population of Chinese-speaking ethnic Koreans.

## Religion in South Korea

- Though Buddhism is South Korea's dominant religion, twice as many people claim no faith in God at all.
- Although the rate of church growth in South Korea has slowed, there is still a high percentage of South Koreans who identify themselves as Christians.
- More than 28,000 missionaries, spanning all denominations and mission-sending organizations, have been sent from South Korea.
- The Korean Baptist Foreign Mission Board has nearly 700 missionaries serving in more than 40 countries or people groups around the world.

## Bridges and Barriers to the gospel

### Bridges

- Evangelical Christianity is firmly woven into South Korea's modern history and closely linked to its acceptance of Western values in education, medicine and economic development.
- Christian materials are readily available in South Korea online or at Christian bookstores throughout the country.

Korean Christians use advanced media techniques to produce compelling original materials.

- Having recovered from the Korean War, South Korean Christians are conscious of God's blessings and interested in helping the hurting and suffering in their country and around the world.

### Barriers

- Materialism and emphasis on accumulating wealth makes the church less relevant to many, especially the young.
- Highly publicized corruption scandals among prominent megachurch leaders add to growing cynicism regarding Christianity.
- Secondary students have little time to focus on anything other than homework and exams.
- Some believers compartmentalize their lives, allowing Korea's group culture to supersede the Christian lifestyle they should be living outside of the church.
- Churches in South Korea sometimes find it hard to break from tradition and try new methods of worship and outreach.



## Population

50.5 million (January 2016)

## Religions

Christians 31.6% (24% Protestant, 7.6% Catholic), Buddhist 24.2%, unknown 0.9%, and none (43.3%)

## Language

Korean

## Did you know?

- South Korean television dramas are very popular throughout Asia and the Middle East.
- South Korea is a small country with a worldwide impact through its electronic and automotive giants such as Samsung, LG, Hyundai and Kia.
- Ninety-three percent of South Korean smartphone owners use the same app, a free instant messaging app KakaoTalk.



In some ways Taiwan is very Western and modern. You can board the high-speed rail in Taipei and in just 96 minutes arrive in Kaohsiung, 214 miles to the south. The 101 Building in Taipei was the tallest building in the world from 2004 to 2010, and Taiwan leads the world in the manufacture of electronic notebooks and tablets. But if you look deeper, you will find a culture deeply rooted in age-old traditions.

Most people living in Taiwan are Han Chinese (98 percent), which includes the descendants of those who fled China after the Chinese Civil War (12 percent). The remaining 2 percent are indigenous people.

## Religion in Taiwan

- Taiwan's people are very traditional and "spiritual." Most adults engage in folk religion practices, and many homes and shops have a shrine to honor a deity or an ancestor.
- Traditional Chinese religion is a complex combination of ancestor worship, Taoism and Buddhism. Fortune telling, conversing with spirits, and spirit possession are extremely common, and many believe that the more gods one worships, the better one's fortune will be. If one doesn't get

what he wants, he simply finds a bigger, more powerful god.

- Keeping the spirits of deceased ancestors happy ensures one's own peace and prosperity. Because filial piety is so strong in Taiwan, children often refrain from becoming Christians until after their parents die.
- There are more than 23,000 places of worship to meet the spiritual needs of those in Taiwan, but fewer than 3,500 of them are Christian churches.

## Christianity in Taiwan

- Christianity has been in Taiwan for more than 150 years. The Taiwan Presbyterian Church is the largest and oldest Christian denomination, and Baptists and Lutherans rank in the top five.
- Taiwan has some large missionary-sending, disciple-making churches, but many churches remain small with overworked pastors and too few lay leaders. Church attendance averages less than 50 percent of membership.
- Outside the cities, even fewer people are believers. In south-central Taiwan, most townships with populations of about 25,000 have only one or two struggling churches — if any. In many villages you may not find even one Christian witness.



## Bridges and Barriers to the gospel

### Bridges

- Over the years churches have reached into communities with children's camps and programs. Children remember the Bible stories years later.
- Because Taiwan is highly literate and the study of English is required in schools, English Bible camps are excellent ways to attract students.
- The Taiwanese have a hunger for spiritual things and a desire to worship.

### Barriers

- The Taiwanese often see Jesus as just another god among many and can't comprehend a true God who wants relationship with them and can fill their hearts completely.
- Folk religion is behind many significant festivals in Taiwan, and community activities often revolve around the temple.
- The pursuit of wealth, education and material advancement often results in spiritually weak Christians with little commitment to serving God.



## Population

23.39 million (January 2016)

## Religions

Mixture of Buddhist and Taoist 93%, Christian 4.5%, other 2.5%

## Language

Mandarin Chinese (official), Hokkien (Taiwanese) 70%, Hakka 15%

## Did you know?

- Taiwan has the lowest poverty rate and the highest recycling rate in the world.
- Some 22 million Taiwanese remain trapped in the superstitions and beliefs of idolatrous religions.
  - Taiwan stands in a strategic position to facilitate gospel work in China and beyond.





The saffron-colored robe of the monk sways as he walks through the temple courtyard. Despite the wet, falling snow, people swarm throughout the open space. They light red candles, burn joss sticks, and get on their knees to bow before idols, hoping their attention to spiritual matters will bring good fortune in the coming year.

The majority of Buddhists in the world today can be found in East Asia. Estimates of East Asian Buddhist believers are as follows:

- Taiwan — 93%
- Japan — 71.4%
- Mongolia — 53%
- South Korea — 24.2%
- China — 18.2%; countless others combine Buddhism with other beliefs such as Taoism or folk religions.
- Hong Kong (Special Administrative Region of China) — 14%
- Macau (Special Administrative Region of China) — 50%
- Tibet (Special Administrative Region of China) — the majority of Tibetans are Buddhists.

Buddhism is the fourth largest religion in the world with more than 350 million followers worldwide. Siddhartha Gautama, a Hindu Brahman searching for enlightenment, founded Buddhism nearly 2,500 years ago.

Buddhism teaches that there is no God, but one may reach enlightenment — a state of peace and ultimate wisdom — through strict discipline, through study and by performing good works.

**Buddhist practices:** Different schools of Buddhism emphasize different practices. They may meditate, repeat mantras, go on pilgrimages, spin prayer wheels, hang prayer flags, study Buddhist scriptures, burn incense, offer charity and seek enlightenment.

Some East Asians who claim to be Buddhists do not adhere to textbook forms of Buddhism. Instead they mix Buddhism with animism and superstition to create a type of folk Buddhism.

#### Four Noble Truths of Buddhism

1. Suffering exists.
2. Suffering arises from attachment to desires.

3. Suffering ceases when attachment to desire ceases.
4. Freedom from suffering is possible by practicing the Eightfold Path.

#### The Noble Eightfold Path of Buddhism

Right View	Wisdom
Right Thought	
Right Speech	Ethical Conduct
Right Action	
Right Livelihood	
Right Effort	Mental Development
Right Mindfulness	
Right Contemplation	

# Taoism or Daoism

Under the eaves of a small Asian pagoda, the candelabrum seems to hold a hundred red candles. People surround the structure, reaching in to light the candles as a good omen. All around the courtyard of the Taoist temple, similar scenes can be seen at other pagodas. More people come today because it is the New Year, but every day people with hardships and sorrows journey to the temple where they seek some kind of solace for their hurting lives. Taoism, sometimes known as Daoism, originated in China approximately 2,500 years ago. Its root word, "Tao" literally translates to, "The Way." Because Taoism originated in China, many Chinese make it their religion of choice.

## Taoist philosophy and symbols

- The essence of the philosophy revolves around the concept of the Tao, or "the Way," the ultimate creative principal that connects and unifies all things.
- The Tao is not a god, but its followers worship many deities in folklore that are also subject to and dependent on the Tao.
- The Taoist symbol — the yin yang — represents one of the key principles in the religion: a balance of opposites. Taoists teach that the world is filled with complementary opposites such as light and dark, hot and cold, and good and bad.

## Taoist practices include:

- reading and chanting of scriptures
- feng shui (fung-shway), positioning furniture, windows, buildings, graves and other objects to allow the flow of energy, harmonize with spiritual forces and usher in good fortune
- meditation
- ancestor worship
- worshiping a pantheon of deities
- fortune telling

## Understanding Taoism:

- Taoists value compassion, moderation and humility.
- The ch'i (ch'EE), is the Taoist term for cosmic energy that allows people to survive and links them to the universe. Ch'i is accumulated with life and dispersed in death.
- Taoists also believe in "wu wei," a concept of non-intervention, or trying to live in accord with the true nature of the world without obstructing the course of nature. This idea of living in peace and harmony was the basis of the USA's hippie movement in the 1960s. Taoism was the hippie movement of 500 BC.





# Folk Religions

On this cold, misty April day — the Ching Ming Festival — Su Ming's family walks through the Chinese graveyard. As a sign of respect, they visit the grave of Su's recently deceased grandmother. They pull weeds. They bring fruit for the grandmother's spirit to eat, and they burn paper money for her to spend in the afterlife. They even tie a yellow ribbon to the top of the grave to ward off wandering spirits that might bother her resting place.

Finally, they bow to worship the grandmother. Su does not bow, because she has recently become a follower of Jesus Christ. Her parents and siblings are furious at her disrespectful behavior at the gravesite. For weeks, the only time they talk to her is when they argue with her. Su sighs, knowing that each subsequent April will bring the same dreaded family confrontation.

Such is the dilemma of Christians living in a culture where folk religions are practiced.

Folk religions include ethnic or regional faiths that operate without official doctrine or practices. Many in East Asia adhere to these types of religions because for centuries they have been passed down from one generation to another.

## Animism

One of the earliest recorded belief systems, animism, revolves around the idea that spirits inhabit every object, whether plant, animal or soil. Followers use rituals to please the spirits and to encourage rain, healthy crops or good luck, and they often treat inanimate objects as if they were alive. In parts of China, witch doctors are called upon to offer animal sacrifices and create talismans to ward off evil spirits that can cause sickness or disaster.

## Shintoism

Shinto, also an animistic religion, originated in Japan and centers its theology on the worship of spirits, or “kami.” The Japanese don't consider the kami to be gods but consider them as spiritual beings that show interest in humans and

want to make them happy. If properly coaxed by food offerings, songs and dance, the spirits will positively intervene in human lives. Followers make their offerings at shrines, and many install small altars in their homes.

The religion has no founder and no scriptures.



# Confucianism

Confucius, an influential teacher who lived five centuries before Christ, was from China's Shandong province. While he was living, he was considered a mortal man, rather than a deity. However, he was revered as a holy man and his status was elevated after his death.

Confucianism has deeply influenced East Asian culture and political life. East Asian culture and Confucianism cannot be easily separated.

The desire to have a son, respect for one's parents, respect for the elderly and respect for teachers represent a few of the concepts that arise from Confucian teachings.

Confucianism is built on the importance of relationships within society. Each person has his defined place in relation to other people. Knowing the age of those around you, for example, is important to understanding your position in the group; people share their ages, therefore, when introduced to others.

Confucianism teaches women to take a back seat to men in the family. When young, a woman listens to the counsel of her father and brothers. When married, her husband and grown sons take on the leadership role in her life. Understanding one's role in society and behaving properly within that role balances harmony and conformity within society.

## What are Confucian beliefs?

- Confucianism neither denies nor affirms the existence of God or heaven, and therefore many refer to it as a philosophy more than a religion.
- Confucianism centers on humanistic ideology and declares people capable of improvement through personal and communal efforts.
- Although Confucianism does not promote the worship of a deity, it does consider heaven as a positive and personal force in the universe.

## Confucian scriptures

Confucius and some of his followers authored the faith's sacred texts, which include a set of manuscripts called The Five Classics as well as a set of literature called The Four Books. The religion itself does not possess any special practices or rituals, so its followers often perform rituals from Buddhist, Chinese and Taoist traditions instead, carried out at Confucian temples that dot the East Asian landscape.



# Islam

The practice of Islam is usually associated with Middle Eastern countries, but the religion has a strong hold in East Asia, especially among minority people groups that live primarily in the western and northwestern regions of China. In China, about 22 million people follow Islam.

Ten of China's officially recognized 55 ethnic minority groups are predominantly Muslim: the Hui, Uighur, Kazakh, Dongxiang, Kyrgyz, Salar, Tajiks, Bonan and Chinese Tatar. Church planting among these ethnic minorities is difficult because

ethnic identity and religious belief are inextricably bound together. In Mongolia, 4 percent of the population is Muslim.

## Islamic beliefs

- Muslims believe in one omnipotent and omniscient god who created the world and every living thing in it.
- Islamic doctrine states that this supreme god knows who will live eternally with him in the afterlife, but man's free will still determines whether or not that will happen.
- Islam and Christianity differ completely because of their conflicting views of salvation and the means of that salvation: Jesus Christ. According to Islam's holy book, the Quran, Jesus was born of a virgin, but He was not the Son of God.
- Islam claims Jesus was simply a prophet without a father, just like Adam.
- According to the Quran, Jesus did not die on the cross as a payment for sin. Instead, the Quran paints Jesus as a notable figure in a long line of prophets and as the one who foretold of the great and final prophet, Mohammed.
- Muslims do not view their god as either triune or personal.



# Atheism

Ask a typical college student in China if he believes in God, and he will politely tell you: "There is no God. I believe in myself." Multiple generations of Chinese have grown up under the Communist government system that rejects God's existence. Chinese schools teach atheism-based Marxist philosophy as part of the official school curriculum.

## What do Chinese atheists believe?

Atheists believe humans can function on their own and can devise suitable moral codes without scriptural or spiritual guidance. They have no doctrine and no official practices.

Most Chinese people extol advances in state-sponsored science, technology and modern development as the only ways to better their lives. When approached with the idea that God exists, the most common reaction is stunned silence or polite amusement at what they perceive to be backward beliefs.



# Affinity Cities Overview

## East Asia's Cities

The new face of East Asia is found in its cities. If we begin with a strategy of concentrated prayer for the more than 450 cities with populations in excess of 500,000, we believe God will call out workers to take the gospel to East Asia's remaining unengaged cities. Developing and implementing creative strategies to engage these cities across East Asia is critical to fulfilling our vision.

## Materially Rich and Spiritually Poor

The cities of East Asia are filled with the most modern skyscrapers in the world, gleaming urban structures, parks,



museums, cultural and arts centers, recreation facilities, high-rise apartments, cars and a mushrooming population.

Wealthy urbanites and a growing middle-class spend millions on vacations and buy name-brand products at high-end retail malls in China, Hong Kong and Macau. They send their children to the best schools in the U.S., Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. They invest in companies and properties in other countries and consume high-quality goods that drive their own thriving economies.

Many cities have become economic powerhouses, bringing East Asia into a prominent position on the world stage. Living conditions and lifestyles have vastly improved for East Asian people in the cities, but many have yet to seriously consider their eternal destiny.

## Challenges to Evangelizing the Cities

Sharing the gospel with urbanites has many challenges. Many work long hours and make long commutes on public transportation. Often they can afford to buy homes only if they work more than one job. Caught up in a frenzy of work

and play, many just don't have time to talk. They don't get to know their neighbors, and they want their independence. Most urbanites would say that they don't have time for worship, Bible studies or even socializing with friends.

## What Drives Urbanization

People move to the cities for a variety of reasons. Many leave rural areas, equated with farming and poverty, in search of a better life and opportunities to support the families they leave behind.

But in countries like China, village people who come to the cities are looked down upon as second-class citizens. Squatter villages crop up overnight and the inhabitants gravitate toward menial labor and factory jobs because they lack the education and skills to secure better jobs reserved for urbanites. These villages lack sufficient schools, basic utilities and jobs that provide adequate income to meet their needs.

Because village people are often denied residence cards that allow access to city services such as health care, education and workplace protection, many are exploited by their

employers. Despite these challenges, life is better in the city, and the money they earn allows them to support their families at home.

## Urban Centers in East Asia

- Nine-two percent of Japanese live in urban centers, and the Greater Tokyo Metropolitan area, with a total population of 45 million, is one of the largest megalopolises in East Asia.
- Koreans gravitate to the cities as well; 83 percent of Korea's people live in urban areas. Seoul also ranks as one of the largest metropolitan areas in the world.
- Forty percent of Mongolia's people live in the capital city of Ulaanbaatar.
- China is in the midst of the largest urban migration in the history of the world, and the urban population surpassed its rural population in 2011. The government actively promotes massive migration to the cities and builds the infrastructure to support this population.
- According to the United Nations, one-fourth of the world's 1,000 largest cities are in China.



# Unreached People Groups (UPGs) Overview

## Unreached People Groups

If you were born into an unreached people group, such as the Guibian Zhuang of China, you could be born, live your life and die without ever hearing the gospel!

An ethnic group is considered an unreached people group (UPG) when there is no indigenous community of believing Christians able to engage this people group with church planting. Less than 2 percent of its people are evangelical Christians.

With a population totaling 1.67 billion people, East Asia has 654 people groups, most of them unreached. Of the UPGs, 213 have no one even trying to reach them with the gospel, and no one is implementing a church planting strategy to multiply healthy disciples, leaders, and churches among them. China alone has 132 of these unengaged, unreached people groups (UUPGs).

## A Glimpse into a UPG

Most of East Asia's unreached people groups live in China, where minority groups make up about 8 percent of the population. The Chinese government groups the country's 473 distinct minority peoples into 55 ethnic minority groups. Physical and spiritual isolation keep most ethnic minorities in China largely untouched by the gospel.

Let's look at one minority people group that lives along a major river. Most are fishermen and farmers, but some are miners and small business owners. They are animists who seek to control the spirit world as it affects their lives, but also follow the ancient Chinese folk religion. About 86 percent of their people have never heard the gospel!

Many speak only their minority language, in which there are few Christian resources. That lack of resources in their heart language — for evangelism, discipleship, leadership development and church — stands as a major barrier to them hearing, understanding and responding to the Good News.

## Strategic Engagement of UPGs

Evangelism and church-planting strategies used to reach people living in China's major cities will not work among the diverse, isolated rural people groups in China. Contextualized, worldview-specific and prayer-saturated strategies for engaging UPGs with the gospel require creativity, perseverance and hard work. Because almost no minorities speak English, and many of the smaller people groups with populations under 25,000 don't even speak Chinese, learning their heart language is essential to reaching them.

In China, believers from the Han majority who want to take the gospel to their neighbors have to overcome significant barriers to be effective missionaries. Most people groups prefer to retain their language and customs, which rarely overlap with the language and cultural practices of the Han. Cross-cultural training and language learning is foundational for Han believers who want to reach China's minorities.



# Global Diaspora

Wherever you travel throughout the world, you will likely find East Asian peoples. They pursue higher education in the United States, United Kingdom and Australia. They own and operate factories that sell cheap wholesale goods to local distributors. They build the infrastructure of developing nations. They work for major automotive, electronics and appliance companies whose global footprint is extensive. The East Asian Peoples Affinity Group seeks to make Christ known among East Asian peoples like these around the globe.

**Chinese diaspora:** It has been said that where there is sun and water, you will find Chinese people. The Chinese, who have left their nation over many years and for many reasons, constitute one of the largest overseas populations in the world, with more than 60 million people living outside China, increasing annually by hundreds of thousands.

China has seen multiple waves of emigration since the 14th century. You'll find well established Chinese communities in some countries, but even in rural, hard-to-reach villages of Africa you will find small shops owned and operated by recently arrived Chinese families.

China is also the world's top source of overseas students, with the number growing almost 20 percent annually. At the beginning of 2014, more than a quarter million Chinese students held U.S. student visas.

The Chinese work hard and sacrifice much in order to reach their goals. They are often the preferred construction workers in Africa, Indochina and the Americas because they will work long hours with little pay. No longer a part of their homeland, these workers are not yet a part of their new country. Most have gone in search of a better life, but what they most need, the truth of the gospel, remains distant. Few Christians have taken the time to get to know them.

Great spiritual need is found throughout this diaspora. Lack of assimilation into their second culture prevents them from easily adapting to a local church. Language barriers and grueling work schedules cut them off from opportunities for fellowship, and childhood teachings of ancestor worship, Buddhism or atheism continue to bind their hearts. The question remains: how will they hear if no one tells them?

**Japanese diaspora:** Japanese immigrants known as Nikkei first migrated to Peru and other parts of South America in the late 19th century searching for better living conditions after the end of feudalism in Japan. Today, the largest population of Nikkei, 1.8 million, lives in Brazil. Most Nikkei followed Buddhism and Shintoism, but began to embrace Catholicism. Today, 60 percent of Japanese-Brazilians are Roman Catholic and 25 percent adhere to Japanese traditional religion. As work contracts ended, many Nikkei started small businesses and maintained their Japanese culture, religion and language in their homes and communities. Less than 1 percent of South America's Nikkei are Evangelical Christian.

Southern Baptists work among Nikkei in Peru and Brazil and are seeking partnerships to engage the rest of the Japanese diaspora around the world.

**Tibetan-Buddhist diaspora in South Asia:** The Dalai Lama, the spiritual and political leader of Tibet, left his homeland in 1959 due to conflict with China and walked through the Himalaya Mountains to neighboring India. That year and following,

approximately 100,000 Tibetans followed him. Today, the Tibetan presence in India and Nepal continues to grow, and Tibetans scatter across more than 48 settlements throughout South Asia. It is often said, "To be Tibetan is to be Tibetan Buddhist."

Most Tibetans have never heard the name of Jesus Christ. They are not only physically isolated, but the gospel has been virtually inaccessible to them. Yet God is working among them, raising up faithful worshippers committed to Him.

Tibetan Buddhist-background believers have a passion for reaching Tibetans with the gospel. They regularly share Christ with their local friends and lead Bible studies. They have faced persecution, accepting that it is expected for followers of Jesus Christ.

To see healthy multiplying disciples and churches among Tibetans, local leadership must be developed and the gospel must be faithfully communicated, a process often stretching over months and years before Tibetans believe.



# Connect

In a day of rapidly diminishing mission resources, your church can make a radical difference. Prayerfully consider how you might impact lostness among one of East Asia's 213 unengaged, unreached people groups (UUPGs).

## Step 1: PRAY. 1 Timothy 2:1-4

Prayer launches us toward the glorious outcome of all people coming to "the knowledge of the truth." It suggests that God enables us to feel His brokenness over those who remain in spiritual captivity. This brokenness involves:

- Persistent and passionate prayer among individuals or groups in your church who consistently plead God's mercy for a UUPG.
- Focused prayer. Through the East Asian Peoples Affinity Group Connections Cluster ([eastasiaprayer@pobox.com](mailto:eastasiaprayer@pobox.com)), you can request a status update for the most unreached people groups in East Asia. As your team prays through this list, God may direct you to the people He has equipped and is calling you to reach.
- Informed prayer. As God directs your team to a specific people group, request that the Affinity Connections Cluster

send you specific information on this people group.

[eastasiaprayer@pobox.com](mailto:eastasiaprayer@pobox.com)

## Step 2: EXPLORE. Numbers 13:2

In this step, gather information needed to plan an effective strategy and determine how to deploy resources to accomplish this task.

- Contact your associational director of missions. Find out if there is a potential close-culture partner in your area (a Chinese, Korean or Japanese Baptist church) with which you might partner. Are there already God-appointed interpreters and/or a culture coach in your city with whom you can meet?
- Become familiar with anthropological and missional websites that may help you develop a deeper understanding of the people group (such as [joshuaproject.net](http://joshuaproject.net) or [people-groups.org](http://people-groups.org)). Visit us at [imb.org/eastasia](http://imb.org/eastasia).
- Determine whether Scripture portions are available in your people group's heart language or whether you will need an oral strategy.
- Work with the East Asian Peoples Affinity Group Connections Cluster to plan a vision trip to the area. When will be the best

time to go? With whom should you meet while there?

- While on the ground, conduct a "needs assessment study" to determine such things as:
  - How will you develop legitimate access to that people group?
  - What needs can be addressed in a way that may give an opportunity to "cast the seed" of the gospel? Are there regional colleges and universities with students from your people group?
  - What market language(s) may be used to communicate the Good News among this group?
  - Once you've determined the appropriate market language, develop and train your team to use bilingual evangelistic materials.
  - Are there other like-minded, close-culture people groups living nearby who might partner in this strategic initiative?

## Step 3: EXAMINE. 2 Peter 1:3

Assuming that God does not call without also equipping your church for this assignment, begin the process of self-examination:

- Based upon information discovered in Step 2, could your church leverage businessmen or others in your church

already traveling internationally?

- What skill sets, such as medical, engineering, agricultural or mechanical, has God already placed within your church that might provide relevant, long-term access to this people group?
- Will there be significant physical or health demands for daily living among this people group?

## Step 4: TRAIN. Daniel 1:4-5

As you begin to move toward Step 4, your team will increasingly be considered part of the broader East Asian Affinity Team seeking to impact lostness among all Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Mongolian peoples.

# Connect

You will be offered training and orientation to help you add skill sets to your engagement toolbox and become full, valued members of this global missions venture. This will include pre-trip training through the East Asian Peoples Affinity Group Connections Cluster and just-in-time, on-the-ground training through the Connections Cluster and our Training Cluster. This training will include things such as these:

- How do I find a “person of peace” in a new community or village?
- How do I find the point from which authority flows in this community?
- How do I discover the “fingerprints of God” that may then serve as a bridge for gospel-centered conversations?
- How might I tell the complete redemptive story, “Creation to Christ,” in 30 minutes or less?
- How do I gather those being saved into an expression of church that makes sense in that context and that encourages biblical integrity and healthy reproduction?
- As faith grows among this people group, how do I avoid behaviors that lead to dependence?

East Asian Peoples Affinity is committed to working with you as you extend the ministries of your local church to the “ends of the earth!” In serving, sharing and giving together, it is our prayer that soon, just as the prophet Habakkuk prophesied, **“the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD as the waters cover the sea” (Habakkuk 2:14, ESV).**

To receive regular ministry updates on East Asian Peoples on your mobile device, download the **IMB EA Connect App** from the Apple App Store for your iPhone, or from the Google Play Store for you Android.



**EA Connect App** (free)





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If you need more information,  
please contact **[eastasiaprayer@pobox.com](mailto:eastasiaprayer@pobox.com)**.

